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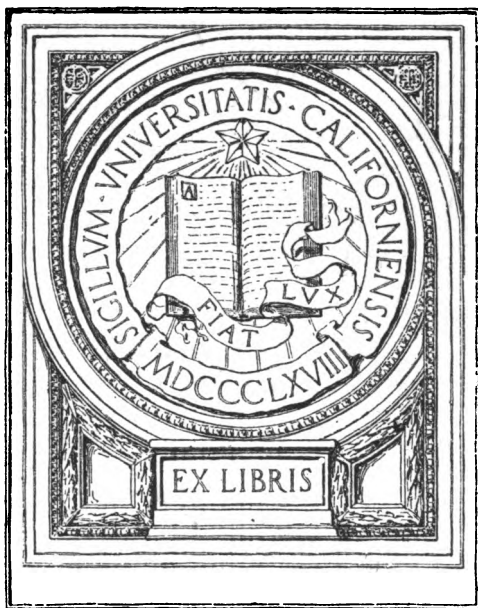
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GOLGOTHA

A Study of the Sweet, Sad Story of the Cross



D. J. KAVANAGH, S. J.



THE JAMES H. HARRY COMPANY

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To the young men and young women of San Francisco who inaugurated the movement for the "Reverent Observance of Good Friday," and who, for the past four years, have labored so zealously and so fruitfully in making the sweet, sad story of the Cross more widely known and more deeply appreciated, this little book is affectionately and gratefully inscribed by the author.

PREFACE

A desire to contribute, in an humble way, towards the realization of the policy of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, which, as he tells us, is to cause "the charity of Christ to prevail among men," has prompted the publication of these little reflections on the Passion of our Divine Savior.

The world has tried human love-motives and the human love-motives have failed. It has tried human brotherhoods and they have fallen with a fearful crash. It has placed exaggerated confidence in the natural goodness of man, and the natural goodness of man has proved to be but a new name for a very old and a terribly dangerous thing called selfishness. Human motives are pitifully insufficient to meet the demands of the world. Man needs a motive that is not of the world, if he is in earnest quest of a love that is not worldly. "A new commandment I give unto you," said Christ on the eve of His death, "that you love one another, as I have loved you." This is the very marrow of Christianity, this it is that makes Christianity lovable and fruitful of good; but a passive admiration of its sublimity will not do. We must study *how*

Christ loved us, if we wish to put in practice this sublime precept of love which formed His last will and testament.

The final chapter in the life of Christ tells us, as nothing else can, how He loved the world, it teaches a love that is not selfish, a love that is universal, a love that does not grow cool when a sacrifice is demanded, even though the sacrifice be death. The story of His Passion summarizes His whole career on earth and though, by every event of His life, we are strongly impelled to love our fellow men, we are irresistibly impelled to love by a detailed study of His death.

The thoughts here offered for prayerful contemplation have been gathered from various sources, chiefly from *L'Homme-Dieu Souffrant* of the fervent Passionist, Pere Seraphin, and from *The Watches of the Passion*, by Father Gallwey, S. J. Many ideas, too, have been borrowed from the eloquent sermons of Father Bernard Vaughan, S. J., of Father Robert Kane, S. J., and of the lamented Father Hugh Benson.

The method followed throughout is that of St. Ignatius, who, in his book of "Spiritual Exercises," insists a great deal on what he calls "Contemplation," which consists in studying the persons, the words and the actions of the sacred

narrative, with a view to spiritual and lasting profit.

Finally, the author wishes to state that this little book is intended chiefly as a souvenir of the Lectures delivered at St. Ignatius Church, on the Wednesday evenings of Lent, 1915. "Genuine Christian Science" was the subject of the Lenten Lectures and "Genuine Christian Science" is the subject of this little book. St. Paul taught the substance of Christian Science when he wrote to the Corinthians: *"And I, Brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

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PROLOGUE

It was Thursday night, one of those bright, starlit nights, we may suppose, of an Oriental spring. The soft rays of the rising moon fell in streams of silver upon the Temple and the closely-huddled dwellings of the Holy City. Jerusalem slept and presented to view the appearance of a vast collection of sepulchres. How like to death is sleep! How like and yet how unlike! Quietude and rest and dreams accompany both, but in the case of sleep the quietude and rest are real and the dreams but empty nothingness, while in death, the dreams, if indeed they may be called dreams, are real and sometimes fearfully real, and the peaceful rest, it may be, is only an appearance. On that memorable Thursday night Jerusalem slept, but not all Jerusalem; there were two distinct groups of men awake and, as we shall see, very much awake.

In the house of Caiphas, a magnificent palace that crowned Mount Sion and looked with haughty disdain upon the city, even as its occupants looked with haughty disdain upon the people, there was held a council of High Priests. There was a thorn in their side that must be plucked out. They could no longer endure the

popularity of Jesus of Nazareth. For three years He had been winning the applause of men; the holiness of His life, the sublimity of His doctrine, the power He possessed and the goodness which ever accompanied its exercise, all these things united to win the people to His cause. But a few days previously they shouted their Hosannas of welcome and even proclaimed Him King of the Jews. It was more than Caiphas and his fellow priests could endure. They wanted to control things, they wanted to be leaders, socially, politically, religiously, and Jesus of Nazareth stood in their way. That is why a council was in session on that memorable Thursday night.

The other group whom sleep has not yet conquered are strangers, as the expression was, in Jerusalem: they are Galileans. Twelve of them walk slowly and sadly through the silent streets and out towards the Garden of Gethsemane. Their Master is none other than Jesus of Nazareth against Whom the priests are plotting. He is sad, sad even unto death, that is to say, so sad that His Sacred Heart is ready to break. He takes three of His followers apart from the others, asks them to watch with Him and then prostrating Himself on the ground begins to pray.

To pray! What is the use? What good does it do? Can prayer relieve the sufferings of the world? Can it feed the hungry or clothe the naked? Wait a moment. In the council of High Priests they do not pray, they have lost all knowledge of the art of prayer, they think worldly thoughts and devise worldly things. Do *they* feed the hungry or clothe the naked? Wait and see how it fares with Jesus of Nazareth at their hands, with Jesus of Nazareth, Who never did an unkind deed, Who never spoke an unkind word, but went about from place to place doing good and teaching the world to imitate His example.

Between the prayerless plotters and the prayerful Savior there is a connecting link. It is the traitor, a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. He hastens through the silence of the night in a direction opposite to that taken by his Master. He feels his heart throb, he looks back, he hesitates and then rushes on again. His eyes glare, his brow is knit, his teeth set, still onward he urges his hurrying steps until he reaches the palace that crowns Mount Sion. "Caiphas!" he cries. "I want to speak to Caiphas!" "Judas," someone whispers, "one of the twelve!" He casts his glaring eyes from one priest to another and when he has recognized Caiphas, he speaks.

You need not enter that assembly to hear the traitor's words; you can hear them from without, you can hear them ringing down the long stretch of centuries, you can hear them now on all sides and from all classes of men; they have become, it might almost be said, the standard of human activity: "*What will you give me and I will betray Him unto you?*"

Now the great drama has begun. The history of the world knows no work similar to that which Christ is facing. Men have saved their country from wars, from invasion, from destruction. Statesmen have constructed laws and founded empires and have ruled nations. It is all glorious work and ennobling, but the greatest human endeavor is transitory, a mere ripple on the ever changing surface of human history, a bubble doomed, sooner or later, to burst and be no more. Now you may contemplate the beginning of a Divine work. Christ is about to take upon himself the sins of the world, the sins of all men from Adam to the last child of the race. As God He sees it all,—the Almighty dethroned to make room for beastly passions, heresies breaking with the Truth, blasphemies unutterable, rebellions against legitimate authority, revolutions that shed torrents of human blood, impurities that defile human nature, hurl-

ing it from the dignity of angels to the level of the brute, dishonesty and drunkenness, lying and hypocrisies, in one word, humanity in the sordid grasp of moral defilement,—as God He sees it all and as Man He bows beneath the burden, and takes upon Himself the sins of the world. He becomes the vicarious Sinner, that is to say, He offers Himself to stand between the sinner and the justice of an all holy God.

This voluntary substitution of Himself in place of the sinner is not without a struggle. "Father," He cries, "if possible let this chalice pass," spare Me this monstrous burden against which My whole being rebels, "yet nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done!" He understands what it means, He sees the horrors awaiting Him, He seems to falter but does not really falter. His prayer is in substance this: "My Father, the burden is heavy, the impending sufferings strike terror into My human soul, still if it is Thy will I bow beneath the burden and offer Myself for the suffering." He knew that it was His Father's will. He knew that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for its Redemption and so, though the prayer is a petition, it is at the same time, a voluntary oblation. He is to suffer because He wills it. "Father," the prayer may be inter-

puted, "since it is Thy will to save the souls of men by My Passion and Death, I offer myself for the momentous work. I take upon Myself the sins of the world. Let Thy justice strike Me, wound Me, bruise Me, but spare the sinner!"

If you wish to study the circumstances of that prayer, you may recall the details of the Gospel narrative,—how the words were repeated three times, how the inward conflict caused a sweat of Blood, how, during it, the Savior was left alone by the sleeping Apostles and how He lovingly complained that they could not watch one hour with Him. But perhaps you will get a more vivid impression of what took place if you recall the words of the prophet. "Who is this," he asks, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments?" "It is I," he answers in the person of Christ, "It is I that speak justice and am a defender to save." "But why is Thy apparel red and Thy garments like those that tread the wine-press?" "Because I have trodden Gethsemane alone."

Truly alone, but not for long. While the Apostles slept the traitor was awake, the priests were awake and toiled in exaggerated preparation for the seizure of their Enemy. A strange band had been hastily gotten together, Jewish

soldiers who formed the Temple Guard, were joined by a contingent of the Roman Garrison from the Tower of Antonia, and to these were added the servants of the High Priests, all heavily armed with swords and spears and clubs, and all feeling the importance of the great work in hand. A great work indeed! They were to seize One Who knew no weapon other than goodness and love! They were provided with lanterns and torches to seek for One Who had spoken openly and moved fearlessly through the Holy City and Who in secret had done nothing.

The details of the arrest of the Savior are familiar. The two groups of men meet. Weakness encounters strength, love is on the one side and unspeakable hatred on the other. There is the kiss of the traitor, the exaggerated zeal of Peter, the manifestation of power by Christ, whose gentle answer, "I am He," "had in it a strength greater than the Eastern wind, or the voice of thunder, for God was in that 'still voice' and it struck them to the ground"; there is the dispersion of the Apostles and then the binding with cords and chains and Jesus of Nazareth is led away a captive! It is all over now; beautiful were the lessons He taught, majestic His life amongst men and

wonderful was the exercise of His power and goodness, but He is a Prisoner now. No signs appear in the heavens, there is no roar of thunder, no lightning flash, no devouring fire from heaven to consume the impious captors. Nothing but a weary unarmed Man surrounded by a band of soldiers is seen by the few terrified Galileans who had followed Him for three years. The hands that were never used except in deeds of mercy and of love are weighted down with chains; the eyes that could penetrate into the very sanctuary of one's soul are dimmed with tears, the ears that listened with compassion to the wail of the sick and life-weary are now filled with insults and boastful jeers of a despicable band of soldiers, and He is urged along through the night, over the brook of Cedron, up the steep slope beyond, to the palace of Caiphas.

THE THREE TRIBUNALS

The strange Prisoner is subjected to several trials and to indescribable ignominy. We may, however, for purposes of contemplation, reduce the trials to three. Christ had taught us that, to gain eternal life, we must encounter and overcome a threefold enemy, the World, the Flesh and the Devil. He now allows Himself, for our instruction, to be conducted before three distinct tribunals, which symbolize the great trilogy of wickedness. To-day many spurn the teachings of Christ, some even go so far as to say: "We love the World, we pamper the Flesh, we defy the Devil." Let them see how it fares with the Savior at the hands of these enemies of man's immortal soul!

The division which is here followed is altogether arbitrary; in no single trial was there but one influence at work. All of those who assumed the character of judges of Jesus Christ were prompted by the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Still, in each case, there seems to stand out preeminently some special passion or some pronounced influence. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that the three tribunals before which Christ appears may be viewed as symbols of the three

concupiscences; the Court of Pilate symbolizes the Concupiscence of the Eyes, that of Herod, the Concupiscence of the Flesh, while the tribunal of High Priests is an impersonation of the Pride of Life. Such a division harmonizes better with the degree of malice manifested by the different persons concerned, but, to keep to the chronological order of events and the Scriptural order of the Concupiscences, we may study the Savior encountering Worldliness in the palace of Caiphas, Luxury in Herod's Court, and Diabolical Wickedness in the trial before Pilate.

The Jewish nation was eminently religious, but the representatives of that religion became mere creatures of pagan authority. The Supreme Council, and the High-priesthood itself, were usurped by sceptics, generally known as Sadducees, who believed neither in a future life, nor in the guiding Providence of God. Religion was for them to end with this life, it was a profitable means of securing peace and order, but it had nothing supernatural in it. Between the Sadducees and the people there were the Doctors of the Law, or Pharisees. They troubled themselves about the letter of the law and missed its spirit. Their religious sense was blunted by the prevalent materialism of the age and they sought for a kingdom in this

world. No wonder the people lost all sense of their destiny and of the supernatural and looked for the coming of a kingdom on earth in their intoxication of pride! Their hopes, like those of the present day humanitarians and socialists, were the hopes of madmen.

It was into the midst of this people that Christ came. He came with a religion that was, in every sense of the word, supernatural. Any one sentence of His doctrine such as, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," overturns all worldliness; studied as a whole, it manifests other-worldliness at every angle. In the first place He was the Son of God, equal to His Father, His religion had nothing transitory about it; nothing imperfect, nothing finite, nothing exclusive. It embraced all men, all time, all truth, all goodness. In a word it was Divine because its purpose was to lift men to God, because the means used for the accomplishment of this purpose were intended for the sanctification of men's souls.

The Pharisees and Sadducees and the people knew this supernatural phase of His teaching, but they did not want it. They wanted independence of Roman rule, they wanted an earthly kingdom, they wanted a Messiah who would change earth into a paradise, and so the decisive

question at His first trial was this: "Tell us plainly, art Thou Christ the Son of the Blessed God? Answer, I adjure Thee, in the name of the living God!"

They did not ask the momentous question in the spirit of those moderns who represent the "sonship" of God as the common privilege of all mankind; they asked it in the spirit in which Christ claimed this divine Sonship. They wanted to know if He was in truth and by nature, not merely in figure and by adoption, the Son of the Most High God. It was with them a question of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

"Tell us plainly; art Thou Christ the Son of the Blessed God?" they asked.

"I am!" was the brief answer of the Prisoner.

"He hath blasphemed!" shouts one.

"What need have we of further testimony?" asks another.

"He is worthy of death!" concludes a chorus of voices and thus the WORLD condemns the supernatural claim of Christ's teaching and the supernatural character of His Divine Person.

Their present-day imitators, who profess reverence for Him because He was the Son of God just as we all are the sons of God, if we would but realize our sonship, though apparently asserting the dignity of man against the

materialism of the world, are in reality denying the claims of Jesus Christ and exclaiming with the godless priesthood: He hath blasphemed.

Repeatedly had Christ claimed to be the Eternal Son of God, repeatedly He had claimed, and His whole life proves the claim, that He was, in the true sense of the word, Divine. Now with greater emphasis than ever before, He asserts His Divinity and with a full realization that the worldly minded men before whom He stands cannot brook the idea of the claim, He adds to the assertion the great prerogative of the Godhead, the judgment of the living and the dead: "Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Such is the substance of the first trial. He is found guilty, nay He pleads guilty of the "crime" which the WORLD will not pardon, "that He is in truth the Son of God." We shall now study Him in His trial by the second great Enemy of the Supernatural, the FLESH.

Herod was an adulterer and a murderer. He was a murderer because he was an adulterer. The two great crimes go hand in hand even now. Adultery and all the allied sins of impurity so warp the soul, so darken the mind that even the foulest of all foul crimes, murder,

becomes a thing of no special heinousness to the impure mind. The reference is not only to that kind of murder which stained Herod's soul with the blood of the Baptist, but to that more despicable kind that made Herod's father guilty of the blood of Innocents. Murder lurks in the wake of impurity.

In the appearance of Christ before Herod we may learn, and this is the lesson of importance now, what the Flesh and the votaries of carnal pleasure think of Christ and what Christ thinks of them. There is only one thing worthy of our notice in the trial of the Savior by Herod, it is the terrible silence of Jesus Christ. He spoke to Judas, He spoke to the High Priests. He spoke, as we shall see, to Pilate; but before Herod He hung His head and would not open His lips!

Herod mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate. It is not without reason that we consider the trial before Pilate as one in which the Savior of the world encounters our third great Enemy, the DEVIL.

Such a direct attack seems to be the only explanation of the wickedness that reached its highest pitch before the Roman Governor. A storm of frenzied passions raged with ever increasing violence until it swallowed up the Just

One. It was set in motion, to all outward appearances, by the Pharisees, who moved about inspiring the rabble with new ideas and giving keenness to their thirst for blood.

Their efforts were met with ready response by the brutal mob and the shouts were hurled with overwhelming vehemence against the weakness of Pilate until, yielding to their demands, he passed the death sentence on the Savior of the World!

That is all the historian can find in the records of the trial, that is all that appears on the surface; but a closer analysis will discover an influence that knows no explanation in human psychology.

"Behold," said Pilate, "I bring Him forth to you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him." And they cried out saying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

That is the substance of the trial. No crime is found in Him, but still He must be put to death. Even to the end Pilate protested his innocence of the blood of this "Just Man." It is impossible to understand the situation, unless we go below the surface and attribute it to the influence of Satan.

That there are Satanic influences at work to-day is not a difficult thing to prove. You need

not think of the occultism of the psychical research societies, nor of the ravings of those who worship at the shrine of Isis Unveiled. You need not restrict your thoughts to the maniac madness of the bomb-thrower nor to the still more culpable madness of the intelligence that inspires the dreadful deed. These are the culminating points of Satanic wickedness; less pronounced and, in consequence, more dangerous are the workings of Satan in Society. There are homes where the name of God is never mentioned, there are theaters that flaunt before the eyes of innocence all that is low and lowering in human wickedness, there are displays of art that would make the pagans blush, and newspapers that revel in immoral and immodest delineations. All these and countless other forces of wickedness are marshaled together into a great army and move along under the direction of the Powers of darkness.

But let us return and see how it fares with Jesus Christ under Satanic influence.

First He was scourged and crowned with thorns. It is a frightful thought and full of horrors. The soldiers conduct the Savior of the world into an underground dungeon to begin their bloody work. The Roman scourging was at best so terrible that the victim rarely

survived and on the present occasion the soldiers who hated the Jews and especially those who ambitioned power, signalized themselves with unusual brutality. The blows descended and the Sacred Blood poured out in torrents and yet the strange Sufferer uttered not a word of complaint, not a sigh of pain, not a murmur of intensified agony. The soldiers grew exhausted, they cut the cords that bound their Victim and He fell in a pool of Blood. It is a terrible sight, the naked, mangled body of the Son of God! It was perhaps the very scene that the prophet had before his eyes when he described our Blessed Lord as "a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people."

Take one glance at the awful picture and run away. Where shall we go? Shall we join Judas? We sinned as he sinned. He cannot bear to think of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Shall we, with him, try to stifle the thought? No! Let us not join Judas; he is in despair, in black, blind, demon-like despair! Look, he rushes to the High Priests, throws their sordid money down before them, secures a halter and hangs himself! Shall we go to Herod's Court? He does not think of the worm and no man! His court rings with the music of sensuousness,

his sycophantic admirers flatter him and pander to his sinful desires. Shall we join him? No! No! Our blessed Savior would not speak to him, would not so much as look at him! Shall we with Pilate wash our hands and say: "I am innocent of the blood of this Just Man?" No! because it were a lie! He was bruised for our iniquities, He was wounded for our sins.

I know where we shall go! Out in the quiet of the city there is a Woman. She is called the Refuge of Sinners. She is the Mother of Him Who was scourged. She is in deep grief, a sword of sorrow is piercing her soul, but she will be glad to welcome us, to console us and to tell us what to do. "Yes, my child," she will say to us, "your sins have caused that Sacred Blood to flow, your sins put bitterness into the lash, but fear not, it is for you He suffers. He is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. He will take away your sins if you go to Him and stay with Him to the end."

We may then return with security. The scene is changed. The worm is now a King, but O God, a mock King only! He has upon His head a crown, a crown of thorns, in His hand a mock sceptre, one of the reeds used in the scourging, and about His mangled body a

purple robe, a disreputable looking rag that clings to His flesh and is rendered more purple by His Sacred Blood.

He stands upon the porch of Pilate and faces the frenzied mob. At His side the Roman Governor motions for silence and leaning out over the balcony he cries aloud: "Behold the Man!" Suddenly, and with the roar of a storm-tossed sea beating against the rocky barriers of earth, there comes the echo: "Away with Him, Crucify Him!" "But He hath done no evil!" "Away with Him, Crucify Him!"

O what a strange mad thing a mob may be! But yesterday they shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" to-day they cry: "Give unto us Barabbas!" And your King? "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" But His Blood? "His Blood be upon us and our children!"

And Pilate released unto them Barabbas and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

THE MOB

It happens on a little hill called Golgotha, outside the city of Jerusalem, at about the sixth hour, noonday according to our reckoning. It is the occasion of a great gathering in the city. Thousands have come from far and near to celebrate the Passover and unconsciously to play a strikingly important part in an event greater than the historic deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. They are to take part, a very undesirable part, in the deliverance of the world from the bondage of Satan, Sin and Death. It is noon and were it not for the unexpected development of events, the trumpet-call would be announcing the hour for the sacrifice of the paschal lambs. Now there is no trumpet sound, no sacred functions are in progress, but an universal shout and the frantic excitement of the rabble proclaims the hour for the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God!

The meridian sun is beating down upon the assembled multitude, most of whom are exhausted by the toil and excitement of the morning. They had followed the Prisoner from the palace of Caiphas to the Praetorium, thence to Herod's Court and back again to the Praetor-

ium, where for hours they have shouted for His death. There is no record of a pause during that entire fateful morning. From the early hours for most of them, from the previous afternoon for some, there was no respite, no rest, not even time given for food or drink. And yet in spite of the sun's heat, in spite of the fatigue, in spite of their hunger and consequent exhaustion, they have gathered on the hillside, and are struggling for a place of vantage. They have prevailed upon the weakness of Pilate, and they are not going to miss the great spectacle.

What a strange, weird thing human nature is! If we should but serve God and exert ourselves for the benefit of our fellow men with even a slight degree of the energy that an unusual excitement can provoke, how vastly different, how consolingly better the world would be! What an unreflecting thing human nature is! But yesterday this same mob shouted their thundering Hosannas and to-day they have clamored for His blood. Public opinion is very plastic! It may be easily molded, it may be more easily changed. "‘Hosanna’! to-day; ‘Crucify Him!’ to-morrow," summarizes the history of mob-psychology. It is the same now as it was at the

time which we are studying. It will be the same until the end.

We shall the better understand what the Son of God had to endure, if we will mingle with the rabble that has gathered on Golgotha. It is a strange mixture of every class and condition of men. Priests are there with their drawn faces and hypocritical pretence, young levites not fully, perhaps, but sufficiently steeped in hypocrisy to cause them to make some religious remarks upon the terrible event that we are about to witness. There are Pharisees and Sadducees, and minions of the adulterous Herod; Roman soldiers and the Temple Guard vying with one another in brutality and in Satanic wickedness; strangers who have come up to Jerusalem for the Passover and natives of the Holy City; men and women and children, all come out to see the end, to see the Lamb of God slaughtered on the top of Golgotha. They form a vast sea of humanity, a storm-tossed sea, whipped to fury by the frenzied passions that are fanned to ever increasing intensity by the promptings of the High Priests.

"This Man or Barabbas?" asks one, repeating, in blasphemous jest, the appeal of Pilate.

"Barabbas! Barabbas!" comes back in sickening vehemence the Deicidal cry of the madmen.

"But your King?" continues the jest.

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" roars the fearful echo.

"His Blood?" Some one ventures.

And with the persistency of evil doers they shout: "His Blood be upon us and our children!"

There is, in the Church's ritual, a most plaintive appeal directed to this misguided rabble and to all men and women, who by their sins unite with them in heaping insult and injury upon the Son of God.

"O My people! what have I done to thee?" asks the Savior, "Or in what have I saddened thee, reply to Me.

"For I led thee out of the land of Egypt and thou hast prepared a cross for thy Savior.

"I led thee through the desert for forty years and I fed thee with manna, and I led thee into a really good land and thou hast prepared a cross for thy Savior!"

The heart-rending appeal continues, at some length. All the favors conferred on His chosen people are enumerated and similar favors conferred upon us are implied, and after each verse the Church cries out for mercy and for pardon.

"O Holy God, O Holy Power, O Holy Eternal God, have mercy on us!"

Have mercy on us! This prayer must not be forgotten. In studying the frenzy of the mob on Golgotha, we must not, for a moment, lose sight of the fact, that we were there, that our sins and ingratitude and indifference clamored for the Savior's death. When in our endeavor to please men, we sacrifice the service of God, when with the known law of God on the one hand, and on the other some human motive, some transitory gain, we choose the latter at the expense of the former, we join in the cry: "Give unto us Barabbas!"

When unmindful of the loyalty we owe to the Church of Jesus Christ we allow her fair name to be reviled, or through culpable ignorance know not how to defend her honor, when we even allow that there is some reason and justification in the treatment which she receives at the hands of the infidels of France or Portugal, or of the bandits of Mexico,—we say equivalently: Let her be crucified.

O Holy God, O Holy Power, O Holy Immortal God, have mercy on us!

The excited mob was impervious to the appeals which God would have made to their hearts. They had ears and they heard not.

They had eyes and they saw not that their Victim was indeed the Son of God, was in truth the King of the Jews. He was not the kind of a king they wanted. He was not a Messiah after their hearts' desire. They wanted a leader in arms, they wanted a man who would enable them to cast off the yoke of the Roman, they cared nothing and knew nothing of the more disgraceful yoke of Satan.

Perhaps there were some in that frenzied throng who felt in their hearts, what they dared not openly express, a little spark of sympathy for the Condemned. The accusations made against Him were known; He disturbed the peace and tried to make Himself King.

"He restored my little crippled child to me!" thinks a grateful mother. "When all human means had failed and all human hope was dead, He with a single word made her whole and, with a look of love that pierced my heart, He gave her back to me. That was not disturbing the people."

"He fled into the desert when we wished to honor Him," thinks another. "He spurned our applause and, during His whole life, had no place whereon to rest His head. He loved the poor, the outcast and the sinner, He lived with them and toiled for them and taught them to

look upward, to hope and sin no more! That was not the usual way of seeking kingly honors!"

What those, who had retained a little speck of human sympathy, might have said, was in part expressed by a few sorrowing women who caught a glimpse of the Condemned One and wept for Him. "But how strange a Sufferer He is!" these good women are forced to exclaim, "He told us to weep, not for Him, but for ourselves and children."

While the mob is struggling for a favorable place whence to view the last scene in the life of Jesus Christ, the Roman soldiers, assisted by the Temple guard, are preparing the details of the bloody tragedy. They have cleared the top of Golgotha of the over-anxious rabble, and while some are detailed to hold back the excited spectators who are elbowing one another in their determination to keep in sight of the Victim, others are busy in the work of crucifixion. What do the anxious spectators see? and O good God, what do they hear? They hear the oaths, the curses, the obscene jests of the soul-quenched Roman soldiers. They hear the repeated blows of the hammer, the rattle of the nails, the dull thud of excruciating agony caused by a misdirected blow.

And what do they see? It is too terrible to narrate. Close your eyes to it. Draw the curtain over it and pray to God for mercy. They see Him who was the most beautiful among the sons of men, Him Whom the prophets and the Patriarchs of old longed to see and did not see, Him whom the Prophet Simeon saw and exclaimed: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace, because my eyes have beheld Thy salvation." They see Him, the beauty of Whose face, the grandeur of Whose presence make Heaven what it is, while His absence makes hell a place of horror. They see Christ our Lord, but O how different from what might be expected, a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people, a leper and as one struck by God! They see His garments torn from Him and His wounds reopened. They see His hands and feet nailed to the Cross and the Cross raised on high and allowed to drop with a sickening thud into the hole prepared for it.

There is one thing they do not like. In their blind rage they had thought only of the crucifixion, and of the degrading insult that would, by this manner of death, be branded into the very name of Jesus; but now, as they gaze

upon the Cross and see the mangled Body between two robbers, they are suddenly made conscious of an insult that has been directed against themselves by the astute Pilate. Conspicuous over the head of Jesus hangs a tablet bearing an inscription in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, that can be read by every passer-by. It informs them that this Man, nailed to the Cross, between two robbers, is "*The King of the Jews.*" Even from the Cross the King of kings reigns. The Jews saw the insult and asked Pilate to change the wording, to write not "King of the Jews," but that "*He said, I am King of the Jews.*" Their petition was unheeded. "What I have written, I have written," said Pilate, and so the obnoxious inscription remained to the end. "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

To us the picture is familiar and full of unspeakable comfort. Jesus, our Love, is crucified! Literally they have dug His hands and feet. They have numbered all His bones. Our sympathy for Him in His sorrow is mingled with deepest faith and hope of obtaining through Him pardon for the sinful past, and strength against the temptations of the future. With love we draw near to the Cross and look without fear upon His blood-stained face and

lacerated body, or we remain at a distance and prostrate in sorrowing sympathy we beg of Him to give to our eyes a fountain of tears that we may weep for our sins.

There is only one thing that can and ought to cause alarm; it is the temptation to regard the crucifixion as something that does not concern us personally. "Behold," cries the prophet, "there is blood upon thy hands." Yes, there is indeed blood upon our hands and there is blood upon our souls, but we need not fear. He will wash away every stain from our souls, if we but linger a little while in the shadow of the Cross to acknowledge our sins and to beg pardon for them. Have mercy on us, O crucified Savior, have mercy on us. Wash us from our iniquity, so that "no trace, no mark, no scar, no stain, no slightest sign be left to show where sin has been!" Let Thy bright clear grace flood our souls and bathe our inmost being till it reflect, "like purest crystal, Thy loveliness." Let a drop of Thy Sacred Blood touch our sin-stained souls and they will become white with whiteness of Angelic innocence!

FATHER FORGIVE THEM!

Through tear-dimmed eyes, the Savior looks down from His Cross upon the maddened multitude. Like dogs they surround Him, gnashing their teeth, like hungry wolves, the coarse, brutal rabble feed their souls on His excruciating agony of pain. He sees grim hatred stamped upon their upturned, pallid faces, He penetrates beyond the surface and views their souls defiled by the heinousness of sin. One look is all He can bear; He turns away from the horrible scene and directs His gaze and His thoughts towards heaven.

During His passion, He rarely spoke. Like a lamb, He was dumb before His shearers; but when, on several occasions, He did speak, it was to give utterance to some momentous truth or to some solemn and love-inspired warning. Now with His eyes fixed on heaven, He is about to speak. Surely His utterance will be of infinite importance, we must not miss a syllable of it, we must listen not with the ears alone, but with an attentive mind and a heart aglow with love.

"Father," He cries. The word is not addressed to us; He speaks to His Father in

Heaven. He is beginning a prayer. When in the ever memorable Sermon on the Mount He taught the multitude how to pray, He began with this same sweet name, "Father." "Our Father, Who art in Heaven," He said, teaching us the great central truth, the great consoling truth around which all His other doctrine revolves, that God is *our* Father, not my Father, nor your Father, but the Father of us all, characterized by the love and tenderness and care which constitute what we call Providence, and demanding from us a responsive obedience to His law and a filial devotion to His interests. When we learn this exalted lesson and love God as our Father, there will be little difficulty in loving our fellow men as brothers, and until we learn the lesson, our boasts of brotherhood will remain empty and void of enduring results.

All very well, you may say, but it is so hard to recognize the Fatherhood of God, amid the trials of life that seem to grow in intensity and bitterness, with the years. So many are hungry to-day or in fear of hunger to-morrow! So many are sick and weary of life's heavy burden, so many in pain and in the ever tightening clutches of sorrow and sadness! Where is the Providence of Our Father? Look once more at the Cross. Look and listen. The Victim

hanging between heaven and earth, is suffering all that is heart-rending and ghastly—dizziness, pain, thirst, hunger, shame, insults, all intensified by His extreme delicate sensitiveness of Body and of Soul. His veins are lacerated, His flesh crushed, His wounds inflamed by exposure, His Blood gushing forth from every part of His mangled Body. From the sole of His foot to the crown of His head, there is no soundness in Him. So intense, so overwhelming is it all, that in the language of the prophet, He may well cry out: "O all ye that pass by attend and see, if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." And yet from that ocean of grief, He calls upon His "Father!" He wishes to teach us, in our lesser griefs and in our smaller sorrows, to utter the same tender word—"Our Father." It is chiefly in misfortune, when evils press heavily upon us, that we must look from earth to heaven and lean upon the Providence of God. He knows what is profitable for us and if He sends sorrows, blessed be His holy Name!

What does our Lord ask of His Father? Is it a repetition of His plaintive appeal in the Garden, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass?" Such a prayer would, to our human sense of the proper, seem more natural

now ; but such is not the burden of His prayer. Is it an appeal full of holy indignation? Does He call upon God to send His ministering angels to silence once and for all the hissing serpents that surround Him? That, too, seems possible to our human way of viewing things. He drove the merchants before Him in holy anger, when they but desecrated the Temple made by hands, while, at present, the coarse, vulgar multitude is defiling, with insults and shameful jests, the Temple not made by hands!

No, He does not pray for their destruction; He utters a prayer such as the world had never heard, a Divine prayer, sufficient of itself to make one exclaim: Truly this is the Son of God. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Send forth a legion of angels, not with swords to destroy, but with the gentle whisperings of grace, to soften their stony hearts and to purify their sordid souls! They have outraged Me, they have dug My hands and feet, they have passed by and clapped their hands and wagged their heads, and opened their vile mouths against Me; nevertheless, O My Father, pardon them, blot out their iniquity, remember not their sins; Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Truly is the mercy of our blessed Lord

boundless! All His other deeds of mercy, all His parables of mercy, infinite though they be in tenderness, seem to pale before this prayer for mercy. He pardoned Magdalene, but it was because "she loved much"; He pardoned the woman taken in adultery, but it was after the sin had been committed and with the provision that "she sin no more." He told the story of the Prodigal's Father that mirrored the mercy of our Heavenly Father, but the tenderness was shown only after the wayward boy returned from his riotous living. The nearest approach, speaking humanly, to this prayer on the Cross is the parable of the shepherd, who goes in search of the wandering sheep and endures untold hardships to win its confidence and bring it back to the fold; but, it must be noted, the parable does not even suggest the extreme character of the sufferings undergone by the Good Shepherd. Over and above all that is sublime in the teachings of Christ and in His actual life, there is, in the present instance, that incomprehensible degree of mercy which prompts Him to beg for forgiveness, even while the blinded rabble is reveling in their sin, even while they are heaping insults upon Him, and destruction upon themselves.

This prayer forms the climax of Christ's love

for us. For us? Yes, He saw through tear-dimmed, blood-clotted eyes beyond the mob that surrounded the Cross; He saw that other mob, which we call the human race; He saw everyone of us, with all our sins and vicious habits and for all He prayed: Father, Forgive them! Extend an universal pardon, draw them back from the precipice and from the jaws of hell, back from misery to happiness, back from utter destruction to eternal glory.

Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do. If they know not what they do, there is, it may occur to some, no need of forgiveness, for ignorance destroys guilt. It is true, but it must also be remembered that there are two kinds of ignorance, one which is unavoidable and another which, with a little care, may be removed. The former excuses from sin, but not the latter. Ignorance that is courted, ignorance that is affected is, in itself, a sin, and when it leads, as it did, in the case of the Jews, to some terrible crime, it is a terrible sin. They knew not what they were doing, is quite true, because our Lord has thus spoken; but they should have known, they had ample opportunity to know that He was Christ, the Son of the living God, and that they had crucified their Savior.

In another sense it may be said with truth of every sinner, who rebels against Almighty God, that he knows not what he does, he knows not the malice of sin, he knows not that sin blows out the light in his soul, he knows not how hateful sin is in the eyes of God, and how the justice of God will punish it in the next life unless it be forgiven in this. But the sinner ought to know, ample opportunity is given to learn the nature and the malice and the punishment of sin and it is sinful not to profit by the opportunities offered.

According to some commentators it is this very sin of guilty ignorance for which the dying Savior prays for pardon. Father, forgive their criminal blindness. Take away from them the curse of guilty ignorance, otherwise they will never know what they do, and they will go on sinning against Thee, their Father, and against Me, their Redeemer, and all the foulness and horror of sin will be hidden from them. It was to this terrible curse of blindness, this withdrawal of the light of grace, with which the obdurate sinner is sometimes punished, that our Savior referred when, on another occasion, He exclaimed with tears in His eyes. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou didst

but know the time of thy visitation, but now it is hidden from thee!"

In the world to-day there are many who do not know the things of God, they do not recognize the Church of Christ, the need of the Sacraments that have power to weaken their sinful inclinations and that give strength against every temptation. They do not know the necessity incumbent on all men of studying the life and the doctrine of Jesus Christ and studying it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Who remains, not with the individual but with the Church of Christ's institution and shall remain with her forever. They know or imagine they know many things, but the one thing necessary they do not know. Forgive them, Father, forgive them this criminal ignorance.

Forgive them! Our Lord has on many occasions taught us to forgive our neighbor, to forgive even our enemies. The lord of the parable, being angry, delivered the unforgiving servant to the torturers until he paid all his debts. "So also," adds the Savior, "shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

Forgiveness of injuries! It is the perfection of Christian charity. Others have taught the

sublimity of love, they have even taught the desirability of a certain stoicism in the presence of insults; but no man ever reached the heights of Christian forgiveness. The note sounded by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount,—“Love your enemies, do good to them that persecute you,”—is unique in its solemn grandeur and its unapproachable magnificence. It is this that men, of every creed or of no creed, admire so much in the teachings of Christianity.

But how sadly deficient is the world to-day in the practice of such love! “Who would think,” asks the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XV, as he reviews the painful spectacle presented by Europe to-day—the ruin and the carnage, the deserted fields, the languishing industries, the neglected arts, the orphans, the widows, and the sorrowing families,—“who would think that the combatants are brothers, the children of one Father in Heaven?”

Something must be wanting! Everybody admires the dignity of love and the heroism of forgiveness, but nobody seems to care to practice it. Something is indeed wanting. Christian love, with all the sacrifices demanded and all the consequent stifling of self-interest, is beyond the reach of human nature, unless that nature is elevated above itself by supernatural

principles, and impelled by supernatural motives to do, what of itself, it cannot do. This then is what is wanting, supernatural assistance! Humanity has endeavored to get along without God, and the result is plainly written in characters of blood upon the now crumbling arches of human society.

It is all very well to lament, as we are lamenting to-day, the destruction of mediæval art, which, as we say, is the inheritance of the race, it is all very well to speak strongly against the desecration of Temples, which have come down unscathed through the centuries, it is easy to condemn the spirit of the age that has transformed the greatest inventions of human intelligence into instruments of devastation and of human butchery; but sad as the thought is, heart-rending as are the details of the universal slaughter, is it not true that the human race having sown the whirlwind is but reaping the storm! Yes, there are Temples desecrated by the engines of war, but in time of peace they were desecrated by impious decrees that banished the minister of God and destroyed freedom of worship! The accumulated art of the centuries has not escaped from the destroying shrapnel, but in time of peace, that same art was despised and the religion

that inspired the artists was kept in bondage. The inventions of human intelligence, the greatest boasts of science, are used for the purposes of destruction, but had not many boasted, in time of peace, that science had given a death-blow to religion? It was a boast unfounded on fact, but it deceived many and led others away from God, and they who depart from God shall utterly perish. Irreligion knows no weapon but the sword, and builds its hopes on dynamite.

It is easy for man to admire the exalted love taught by Christ throughout His life and exemplified, with such telling effect, in His prayer upon the Cross, it is easy to desire to see such love spread among men; but it is all useless unless the world returns to God through Christ and to Christ through His Divinely authorized Church! The world may return to God when it has learned, from the present conflict, the costly lesson of man's helplessness apart from supernatural principles; but in the meantime there is an estrangement, and, as a consequence, there are enmities and hatreds not only among the warring nations, but even among religious sects. There are periodicals published for the sole purpose of inflaming popular hatred and of sowing the seed of enmities. There are so-

cieties formed, even in our beloved country, whose avowed purpose is to hurl against the Church of Christ the same charges that were hurled against Christ Himself. What can we do to counteract the evil? What can we do to destroy the growing hatred at home as well as abroad? We can do nothing better, nothing more capable of re-awakening the spirit of love than to unite our voices with the prayer of Jesus Christ Crucified: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

THE DIVINE HEALER

We are not altogether certain of the effect produced on the multitude by the Savior's prayer for mercy; but when we recall the words of our Blessed Lord,—“If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself,”—we may, with probability, conclude that there were some beginnings of repentance, and some manifestations of a change in sentiment. A modern scoffer,—whose guilt was the outgrowth of deliberate apostacy and therefore deeper than that of the Jews, which was the result of blind passion and excitement,—has not hesitated to say: “If the death of Socrates was that of a sage, the death of Jesus Christ was that of a God!” Can we not, therefore, suppose that when His sweet plaintive voice was heard, there was a reaction? The passions of a mob acquire a momentum which nothing short of a shock can withstand. If a sight of the mangled body on the Cross was powerless to change their hatred into pity, surely that Divine prayer must have had some effect, it must have served as a temporary shock.

Apart from conjecture we are certain that the Pharisees and their minions had to resort to

a new device to keep at a white heat the hatred of the populace and to prevent them from crying out in favor of their Crucified King. The diabolical nature of the new device seems to point to a turn in the tide of sentiment. Some there were no doubt who recalled the deeds of mercy wrought by the Savior during His lifetime. Had He not gone about doing good? At His word the blind received the gift of sight, the deaf their hearing and the dumb the power of speech. At His command the languid blood received new life and flowed with invigorating freshness through the veins. Nay more, He summoned the dead back from the tombs and manifested a power even over the inanimate winds and waves. Goodness and power, goodness infinite and power Divine accompanied Him through life.

That such thoughts were in reality circulating through the now exhausted crowd, through the multitude drunk with blood, seems the only explanation of the new attack directed against the Savior, and adopted by all who stood about the Cross.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save!" suggested the priests as they moved about among the bystanders or looking towards the Cross wagged their heads in scornful triumph.

"If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross!" the multitude shouted, and again the vast sea of humanity roared and rolled on the hillside.

"Save Thyself!" suggested the Roman soldiers, perhaps even with a half hope that He would come down from the Cross and cause consternation amongst the criminal mob.

"Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple and in three days rebuildest it, save Thyself!" was repeated by those that passed by the way and, as St. Mark tells us, they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.

"Save Thyself and us!" they said, tauntingly, though, in the heart of the Good Thief, that very taunt must have assumed the nature of a prayer, at least, in the making.

There can be no doubt of the effect produced on the multitude by this new reproach. He was challenged to declare Himself and He remained in agony on the Cross. How weak the boasted Son of God really was? Why did not God deliver Him? Where was His vaunted power now? Such thoughts ran riot through the assembled scoffers and they had sufficient proof in His weakness that He was but an imposter and a false prophet, and the shouts of "Save Thyself, if Thou be the Son of God!" grew

in volume, even as the malice of their infidelity grew in intensity.

There are some very important lessons in this incident. We might have imagined that our Lord would be spared this new insult. The memory of His works of love, it might be supposed, could inspire thoughts of pity only. "If I have done evil," every single wound of the Savior seems to cry out, "give testimony of the evil, but if I have done well, if I have saved others, saved them from sickness and death and from the miseries that go to make up life, why do you insult Me for it?" Such, in human calculation, should have been the silent, mighty eloquence of the wounded Body, hanging on the Cross; but the mob, lost in the labyrinth of maddening passions, was impervious to any such appeal. What impresses them is the novelty of the insult and so they repeat their "Vah!" and wag their heads in derision.

The blasphemous challenge is still in vogue amongst certain classes of men. If God wishes us to believe, why does He not manifest Himself in some miraculous way? Why does He not perform some stupendous miracle so that doubt will be impossible? To many the question seems reasonable, and even new, but it is both blasphemous and old. It was asked on

Golgotha, as we have just seen, it was asked on a previous occasion by the Pharisees who wanted "a sign in the heavens," in proof of the claims of Jesus Christ. It was asked by the rich man who died and was buried in hell. He thought that if some one would return from the dead to warn his brothers, it would help very much to induce them to change their sinful manner of life and to avoid a fate similar to his own.

Why does not God satisfy these demands? God, it must be borne in mind, is all holy, and these demands, made in spite of all that He has done for us, are the blasphemous utterances of blind incredulity. God cannot approve of what is wrong and incredulity is terribly wrong. "O My people, what could I have done for you and have not done?" He asks of all the generations of men. To the scoffers who surround the Cross he pleads, with silent eloquence, "By your own admission, I have saved others, in your presence I called Lazarus back from the tomb, I restored sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and have given ample proof of My Divinity, throughout My sojourn on earth, as I am giving proof now in My death! What more could I have done and have not done?" To us and to all the world, there comes a

similar appeal. Christ manifested His Divinity during life by countless miracles, His death upon the Cross was a proof of His Divinity, His resurrection from the dead, the accurate fulfillment of prophecies that had been spoken about Him, of prophecies that had been uttered by Him, all unite to drive home the truth of His Divine character with irresistible force. Add to these Scriptural proofs, the testimony of unnumbered martyrs of all ages and of all classes of people, the zeal of an ever-increasing army of apostles, the spread of His church in spite of unimaginable odds, and her triumph over enemies from without and from within, and you will have no difficulty in subscribing to the beautiful sentiments of Chateaubriand: "He Who could cause a Cross to be adored must have been, we may swear to it, nothing less than God." What more could He have done for us and has not done?

Infidelity or the refusal to believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ and to practice all that such belief implies, cannot be explained by the absence of sufficient evidence, "Let Him come down from the Cross and we shall believe!" is the expression of obdurate and obstinate scepticism and has its origin in something deeper than the so-called difficulties of the intellect.

Pull up a religious doubt and you will find a sin at its root. Study the cause of unbelief and you will find that it is monstrous pride and wilful blindness. "What more could I have done and have not done?" is written large upon the walls of the world.

"He saved others, Himself He cannot save!" There is another lesson of great importance in this blasphemous scoff. The assembled populace publicly acknowledge His power. They proclaim to the world that Christ was a Healer; but observe how their mad cry manifests a carnal selfish mind which failed to see the reason which prompted Christ in the performance of miraculous cures. Repeatedly He had told them that He cured the body to prove that He was sent on earth to cure souls. "In order that you see," He said, "that the Son of Man *hath power to forgive sins* I say to this man (sick of the palsy), arise and walk." Repeatedly, He had taught that solicitude for the body was indicative of a lack of confidence in the Providence of God, and when He left to them and through them to us, a method of prayer, He taught us to ask for spiritual favors chiefly. Constantly and with unmistakable directness He had taught the priceless value of the soul and the comparative insignificance of the body.

"Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear ye Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

All this deeper meaning of spiritual values was hidden from the blind carnality of the Jews. They proclaimed his healing power but only to scoff at its limitations. If Christ were a Healer of physical ills and nothing but a Healer, if He were, ever primarily, a Healer in the physical sense, there was real pointedness in their challenge. If He had come to establish a "sickless humanity," He should have begun with Himself. And in the same manner, if Christ were a Healer of the body, we, who from the vantage point of the twentieth century look back over the records of human history, must admit that He was an absolute and terrible failure. Every individual born into the world has invariably and unmistakably gone out of it through the portals of sickness, or its equivalent, and death! Where is the work of the Divine Healer? Let those answer who blasphemously and without reason still maintain that Christ came on earth to do away with sickness and physical pain! Let those answer who have founded the new religion, the chief promise of which is the cure of sickness and the conquest of pain! But before they answer,

let them, in the sacred name of Jesus Crucified, study the spirit which gives rise to that fearful insult. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save!" "Christian Science," so-called, was born on Golgotha and,—I speak in the spirit of love,—its first believers stood around the Cross and heaped ignominy on the Healer of souls!

The Healer of souls! Let us see. Christ answers the challenge by showing in what sense He has come to save. One of the thieves moved by Divine Grace offers an excellent opportunity for the great lesson. A poor sinner, fortunate enough to acknowledge his sinfulness, utters the first kind word yet heard on Golgotha. It is a note of sweet music amid universal discord, it is a prayer amid the darkest blasphemies that ever issued from the souls of men, it is an act of love amid the demoniacal flood of hatred that encompasses the loving Savior. It can only be explained by the quickening influence of Grace, by the whispering of an Angel to a heart not so hardened as to refuse responsive gratitude. "Lord," cries the thief, "remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!"

It is more, much more than a mere plea for remembrance. It is a profession of faith in the other-world character of Christ's Kingdom. It

is a public act of submission to the teaching of Christ so strikingly emphasized on the Cross that His Kingdom is not of this world. It is an act of hope; the prayer breathes unlimited confidence in the goodness of Christ even towards a poor sinner. It is an act of love, all the more admirable in the hate-laden atmosphere of Golgotha. "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

It is not an elaborate prayer, neither was the prayer of the poor Publican who did not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast saying: "O God, have mercy on me a sinner." But though simple and brief it is in this case as it was in that, powerfully efficacious. "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise!" is the answer of Jesus Crucified. What does this answer mean? It means that all the sins of a lifetime, all the accumulated disorders of a career that deserved the death-penalty, are in a moment blotted out, that the soul is washed white and clothed with a robe of innocence so pure, so stainless, so free from even the dust of sin that this very day the soul of the penitent thief will enter Paradise, the eternal mansion of God and be associated with the angels and saints forever. Nothing defiled can enter Paradise and hence the soul of the penitent of Gol-

gotha has in a moment been freed from all defilement.

This boundlessness of mercy need not surprise us. "In whatsoever day," says God, "the sinner turns to Me, I shall turn to him and all his sins will be forgotten!" All his sins, even though they are as numerous as the sands on the sea shore? Yes, all!, for God's mercy is infinite and infinite mercy knows no bounds. The one thing necessary, is that the sinner forsake the hard task-master and the swine and return to his Father!

Now we understand what kind of a Savior Jesus Christ really is,—He is a Savior of souls; and we understand too, why He did not come down from the Cross. He did not come down because it is by His Sacred Blood that our souls are restored to their primitive whiteness and He wished to shed the last drop of His Blood so that there would be for us and for all the world what, in Holy Scripture, is called "plentiful Redemption." What He did for the body was but transitory, all who profited by His miraculous cures grew sick again and died. He made use of His power to win our faith in Him in order to tell us how much our immortal souls were valued in Heaven. Nothing else counts with God, neither health, nor wealth,

nor fame, nor influence among men; nothing else ought to count with us. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if He suffer the loss of His soul?" is the substance of Christ's teaching in this matter and in keeping with this teaching His Divinely authorized Church instructs the sick and those in danger of death to say with holy resignation:

"O my God I willingly accept and bear all pains and sufferings and even death itself with resignation to Thy Divine will and in punishment for my sins. O my Jesus, I unite my sufferings to Thy most bitter torments. O Lord, here burn, here cut; but spare me for eternity!"

It was this proper appreciation of the relative value of soul and body that inspired those saints of God who looked upon a day as lost when it was unaccompanied by pain, or some equivalent misfortune. They wished, in all sincerity, to "take up their cross daily" and follow Jesus. Return again to the scene on Golgotha and listen to the loving Savior's words: "This day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Our Lord intends to say these same words to us, yes He really intends to address us as He addressed the penitent. So serious is His intention, so earnest His desire, that in order to

be sure of thus addressing us He died upon the Cross. Nothing on earth can deprive us of that happiness, nobody on earth can stand between us and Paradise, except unrepented sin and ourselves! But there is one thing on earth that can draw us nearer to Christ; it is suffering, borne with resignation to the holy will of God.

With Christ in Paradise! What does it mean? We cannot say all that it means, we cannot even in fancy picture what God has prepared for those who serve Him; but we know that Paradise is the accumulation of all good things, and the termination of all evil things. Whatever the human soul is capable of enjoying, whatever its angelic powers of intellect and will and memory are capable of attaining will be attained in ever increasing fullness forever! In Paradise we shall revel in torrents of delight for all eternity. In Paradise we shall know our own, and we shall know all the saints and servants of God of all nations and of all time, we shall know God in all His grandeur and incomprehensible magnificence.

Do not be deceived by those who speak of a paradise on earth, a man-made paradise. It is the dream of madmen and a fearfully empty dream. Paradise on earth! Look around you

and you will find that when it is built by man on man-made foundations, it inevitably crumbles into dust with a mighty crash and with unspeakable ruin. No, we have not here a lasting city, but look for one that is to come. We trust no dreams of selfish humanity but look to Him Who can say, and Who, if we remain faithful to Him, will say to each of us, when life fails, as fail it must, what He said to Dismas on Golgotha: "This day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

MARY, HIS MOTHER

“Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary, His Mother.” These words of the beloved Disciple need not turn our thoughts away from the central Figure of the great tragedy. Familiar as they are to us, and full of power to arouse our sympathy for the Virgin Mother, whose presence beneath the Cross was a martyrdom of untold bitterness, they express, at the same time, another and an unintelligibly deep sorrow and mental anguish of Him Who was on the Cross.

To suffer in the presence of those we love, to suffer and to see the anguish caused in others by our pain is, for the noble-minded, worse than the pain itself. Such at least was the case with our Blessed Lord. He saw beneath the Cross her whom he loved most tenderly, He knew what an ocean of sorrow encompassed her loving soul and He felt additional agony in the thought. But you may say it was but proper that she should be there, the Mother belongs at the death-bed of the Son and her presence seems to remove one terrible feature in the Passion, the utter lonesomeness of our dear Lord. In the Garden, when perspiration ran red with

drops of Blood, He was alone. He was conducted to the tribunal of the High Priest alone. Alone he stood before Herod and on the porch of Pilate. He was alone during the awful scourging and the crowning with thorns, and when He struggled up to the top of Gologtha. From the Cross He looked out over a vast sea of faces and yet He was alone, except for the presence of Mary and John and the few faithful women who accompanied them. Except for this small company of sympathizers, He could say even from the Cross what, without any exception, He could truly say in the Garden: "I looked for one to grieve with Me and there was none, for one to comfort Me and I found none. I have trodden Gethsemane alone!"

Yet the presence of His Mother, heroic though it is and comforting to Him Who loves heroism and sacrifice, adds to His other sufferings a most bitter pang. It may even be said without exaggeration that the sight of His sorrowing Mother was more painful to the Savior than the very nails that pierced His sacred hands and feet. This is explicitly stated in the revelation of St. Bridget. "Whenever my Son looked down on me from the Cross," the Blessed Virgin is reported to have said to the saint, "He was filled with such bitter grief on account of

my sorrow that all the pain, caused by His wounds, was, as it were, lulled to rest, by the thought of my sorrow which He was witnessing."

The presence of Mary then is not the least of Christ's sufferings and it must be studied in all the sorrows it caused, if we wish to get a full knowledge, as far as full knowledge is possible, of what the Victim of Love suffered for us. But there is still another way of viewing the scene. It is the Catholic way, and consists in turning our thoughts directly to the Sorrows of Mary's Immaculate heart. Most of the great saints have written eloquently of the Sorrows of the Blessed Mother of God. They have drawn salutary lessons from the thought that she whom Christ loved, as only a Divine Son could love, was permitted to pass through this bitter agony. St. Bernard applies to her the words of Jeremias, "Great as the sea is thy contrition," and tells us that on Golgotha there were "two seas of sorrow, the sea of sorrow that encompassed the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was full to overflowing, and the sea of sorrow that was caused by the overflow in the Immaculate heart of Mary." "Each wound inflicted on our Lord produces in her uncounted wounds," says St. Gregory, and according to St. Cyprian, "All

that marvelous martyrdom which the Passion effected in Jesus Christ was reproduced in her by her active watching."

Thus the saints in viewing the Cross, see always, in its shadow, the Sorrowful Mother and seeing her there, they pause to give expression to their admiration of her self-sacrificing fidelity to her Divine Son and to study the reasons which prompted the loving Savior to allow His Mother to stay with Him in His agony.

Here on Golgotha is being enacted the last sad scene in the world's greatest tragedy, here is the Cross around which the history of the world revolves. All previous ages looked forward to it, and from it comes a light that dispels the darkness of all subsequent centuries. The Cross has had its battles, bloodless and bloody, and has come forth from each more glorious than before. It was driven from the face of earth by the Roman Emperors, while its children were, day by day, slaughtered in the amphitheaters of Rome, and yet when the conflict was over the humble followers of Jesus Crucified came forth from their hiding places and ascending the Capitol of the Eternal City planted there, amid songs of thanksgiving and hymns of triumph, their Cross-emblazoned stand-

ard of victory. It was the Cross that St. Paul, the Great Apostle of the Gentiles, announced with so much vehemence and eloquence to the pagan world. "I preach Jesus Christ Crucified" was ever on his lips as the love of Christ was in his Apostolic heart. When in the course of time, the Western World was found, the first act of the discoverer was to erect the Cross on the Island of San Salvador,—the Island of our Savior,—while here in California, scattered like mile stones along the Camino Real the Mission Crosses were erected by the devoted followers of St. Francis and inaugurated the conquest of the West.

Christ is admirable in His power, in His wisdom, in His goodness; in the Cross He is adorable, because in the Cross He is God. In the Cross is our salvation, in the Cross is our comfort, in the Cross is forgiveness of sins, hope of Heaven, motives that influence love and arguments that strengthen faith; everything worth while is in the Cross! It will be seen in the heavens when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead, and blessed will be the servants of the Cross on that tremendous day.

With this truth so plainly Christian before your mind, listen again to what St. John tells us: "There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary

His Mother." How incomplete is the picture of Golgotha without that Mother! How naked our Christianity without that Mother! She was with Christ in Bethlehem, when the Angels sang His birth, she was with Him at Cana when He began His public career, she brought Him into the world, she introduced Him to the world, and now, that He is about to leave the world, she stands beneath His Cross. So striking is her presence with Christ in every great epoch of His life that it has been truly said: "Who shun her seek Him not."

The presence of Mary, His Mother, beneath the Cross was the occasion of the next word spoken by the dying Savior. "Woman," He said, "behold thy son," and turning to John who also remained faithful to His Master, He said, "Behold thy Mother." Can it be that the Savior Who is about to die is leaving His Mother to the care of His beloved Disciple? It may readily be supposed that He had some such purpose in view. He was to be separated from Mary by death, He knew what anguish that separation would cause, He knew the desolation and the grief that would be hers, until, at least, the triumphant morning of Easter, and loving her so tenderly it is altogether in keeping with His compassionate nature that He

thinks of her in this manner. "Mother," He says equivalently, "be not desolate, My beloved Disciple will stay with thee in thy sorrow, he will be to thee a substitute for Me, He will speak words of comfort and of hope. Behold thy Son!" "John, behold thy Mother, be devoted to her, as I have ever been, take My place as far as it is possible, not only until I return on Easter morning, but until the time arrives for her to enter Heaven."

Such an interpretation is not only possible; it is both literal and true and manifests the intensity of Christ's love for Mary, but according to the Fathers of the Church, there is another and a deeper meaning in the words. The dying Savior is thinking of us! On the preceding night when He had gathered His Apostles around Him for the Last Supper, He left to the world a legacy, so rich and of such inestimable grandeur that no thought of ours can fathom its soundless depths. He Who, during the three years of public ministry, had given so many priceless lessons and such an admirable example of all that is beautiful and noble in human conduct, wished, before His death, to give us something more, and He gave us Himself under the appearance of bread and wine, Himself whole and entire, Body, Soul

and Divinity to be the sustaining food and the life of our souls.

Surely He has given us enough, the human heart ought to be satisfied, but His Divine Heart is not yet satisfied. From the Cross, at the very hour of death, as if to impress the importance and the value of the gift upon us, He gives to us the treasure He loved most tenderly, the object nearest and dearest to Him, He gives us His Mother!

Such is the meaning attached to these words by the Fathers of the Church, nor is it without reason. St. John, at the foot of the Cross, is the representative of all those who wish to profit by the death of the Son of God. "Behold thy Mother," is addressed through our representative to us, and to Mary, the holiest of the holy, the purest of the pure, have been assigned by the dying Savior the office and the duties of our Mother.

Nor is it only a metaphorical way of speaking. Christ does not merely request Mary to act as if she were our Mother, but He solemnly declares that she is our Mother. A mother is one to whom we owe our life. We have a three-fold life, the life of the body, the life of the mind and the life of the soul. There need be no question of the first two forms of life, be-

cause apart from the soul, they are altogether despicable. We share the life of the body with the meanest shrub that encumbers the ground and with the vilest reptile that lurks in slimy places; we share mental life or intelligence with the demons and with all the great bad men of history,—every criminal is intelligent, many are criminals because they possess an unusually high degree of intelligence.

The life of the soul is not to be despised, it even adds keenness to intelligence, and grace and beauty to mere physical life. It is only another word for Divine Grace and do we not say that Mary is the Mother of Divine Grace and that from her we received the Life of our souls? Christ is the source and founder of Grace and Mary is the Mother of Christ. This is what John tells us in the words which we are studying: There stood by the Cross of Jesus *Mary, His Mother!*

Oh, no! it does not in any way diminish our appreciation of His Divinity and our gratitude for all that He has done for us. Whatever we have of grace has come to us through Him, but is He not Mary's Son? All increase of grace is His gift, and, in an especial manner, the great Sacrament of the Eucharist, that nourishes the life of our souls, is His gift; but is it not true

that the Body and Blood received in Holy Communion were formed of her body and blood? In the sacrifice on Golgotha, He it was that died that we might live, but it was the death of the human Christ; He felt no pain, no sorrow in His Divine nature; it was His Body that was lacerated and it is His Sacred Blood that purifies the soul and did He not receive His Body and Blood from Mary His Mother?

We do not forget that it was the Divinity of Christ that gave efficacy to His suffering and death, and made it possible for Him to atone for the sins of the world, but His humanity was the instrument of His suffering and His humanity was as closely related to Mary as ever son was to mother! It is for this reason that the great saints of the Church do not hesitate to call the Holy Virgin, the co-Redemptrix of the world. She is the Mother of Grace, the Mother of life, for Christ is life.

"Yes, Mother, we were truly born of thee,

In Calvary's second Eden—thou its Eve—

Thy Dolors were our birth-pangs, by the Tree,

Whereon thy dear Son died that we might live."

Behold then, thy Mother, standing in the shadow of the Cross! or, if you choose, behold His Mother! His Mother or our Mother, it is all the same, for He is our Brother, He is the first born of many brethren, our Brother, in like-

ness of nature, in tenderness of mercy, in oneness of life made possible through the Holy Eucharist. *His* Mother! what is there that she *cannot* obtain for us? She need not beg for favors; it would not be the proper thing for a mother to do, she can command as she did command when on earth and if a dutiful son will do what his mother wishes, how blind must they be who imagine that the Divine Son of Mary will refuse anything to His Mother. *Our* mother. What is there that she *will* not obtain for us? No earthly mother is capable of as much tenderness of love as is the great Queen of Heaven, and yet an earthly mother will go through fire and water to help even her wayward child.

We have, it is true, but one advocate with the Father. He was our advocate when from His little bed of straw He stretched forth His infant arms to pray for us. He was our advocate when in the solitude of Nazareth He calmly awaited the day appointed by His Father to begin the work of Redemption. He was our advocate when He hung upon the Cross and prayed for us. He is our advocate now, though He sits at the right hand of God. But He is Mary's Son, and, in another sense, she too is our advocate. He is our advocate with the

Father; she is our advocate with Him. Mother and Son, who will dare to separate them and who will dare to deny that Mary can pray for us? We may pray for one another. Christ taught us thus to pray, to ask not for ourselves alone, but for our brethren: "Give us our daily bread," "forgive us our sins," "deliver us from evil." We, poor sinners, may pray one for another. Cannot the Mother of God do likewise? It is not taking any glory from the Son if we give the Mother her due. She is not the advocate with the Father in the same sense as her Divine Son, Who by His own power, by His own merits stands between us and God. Mary, through the merits of her Son, and by reason of her dignity as Mother, can pray that we may be made partakers in the fruits of the Redemption. As Mother of God she can pray, as our Mother she does pray, and for this reason she is called by the Church, our gracious advocate, advocate with the Father, for she is His daughter; advocate with the Holy Spirit, for she is His spouse; advocate with the Son, for she is His Mother.

Filled with confidence in the power of her intercession there is one thing that we must ask of her to-day, it is the one important thing for which Christ dies, the grace of saving our im-

mortal souls. We have already studied what salvation means, how its very thought overshadows all the trials and disappointments of life and we may now recall what the saints have said of Mary's power in helping us to attain this great eternal boon. All that they have said about devotion to the Blessed Mother of God being a "pledge of salvation" a "mark of predestination" and "a guaranty of perseverance in grace" has been very beautifully expressed in the following lines:

"Whene'er I doubt if one so base as I
Shall share with heavenly choirs their joys serene,
This thought brings sweetest solace to my soul,
That Thou, my Lady, art the Angels' Queen.
Shall I, then, fear to face the glittering ranks
That guard from step profane, Heaven's dazzling
scene?
Their flame-tipped swords will lower at the cry:
'Angels of God, my Mother is your Queen!'"

The one thing to be noted is that if we claim Mary as our Mother, we must endeavor to prove, by virtuous living, that we are in very truth her children! The child resembles his mother; we must imitate her virtues. The child loves his mother; we must love Mary! The child has confidence in his mother, feels secure in her care; we must have confidence and feel secure in the care of our Heavenly Mother.

FORSAKEN!

The words which we have thus far considered, were spoken, according to commentators, at the commencement of Christ's agony on the Cross. There followed a protracted period of awe-inspiring silence. The jeers of the rabble had ceased and most of the spectators turned back to the city and sought the shelter of their homes. The few that remained stood afar off in groups of twos and threes and felt the terrible agony of fear. There are moments in the lives of all of us when we experience what a strange thing fear is and how utterly weak and powerless beings we are when its cold grasp clutches at our hearts. We sometimes try to conceal it, but the pallid face and trembling hands betray us.

The rabble feared, the murderous priests feared, the soldiers feared and the dispersed Apostles feared. There were, no doubt, various gatherings throughout the city, where the deed already accomplished was discussed, and plans were made for future conduct. In the house of Caiphas, some one suggests, we may imagine, that a record of the day's doings be spread upon the Temple register.

"What shall we write?" asks one.

"This day we have crucified Jesus of Nazareth!" is proposed.

"No! No!" it is objected, "Say rather that the Roman Governor ordered the execution of an enemy of Caesar!"

"Are we then to be deprived of the glory of our deed?" asks some more obstinate than the rest; but there is no inclination among them to claim any glory. Fear has seized upon them. They look out towards Golgotha or hear the dull thud of hastening footsteps along the city streets or the low murmur of the returning rabble and their fear increases.

Amongst the dispersed Apostles there is, for the most part, a sorrowful silence. Some of the disciples may have already yielded to the despair of incredulity. "We thought that He was to restore Israel, but now our hopes are nailed to a Cross," they reflect and plunge deeper and deeper into despair. Such uncertainty could hardly have place among the scattered remnants of the Twelve. They understood now, as they did not understand before, some of their Master's sayings. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem," He told them but a short time ago, "and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the

Son of man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon and after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again."

These and similar words occur to them, and there is the dawn of understanding. The first part they understand fully, but they seem in woeful ignorance of the promise to rise again, for, if they had grasped the meaning of this clearly expressed promise, they would now, it seems to us, rush out to the Cross and swear allegiance to their Crucified Master. As it is they give way to grief, and to fear, or, if they hope, it is a hope unaccompanied by firm belief that He who has been Crucified is their God. Shame too must be in their hearts, when from afar they gaze upon the Cross standing out ominously against the sky and think how Mary and John and even Magdalene are standing by the side of the Master, faithful to Him even in His agony and disgrace.

Nearer the scene of the crucifixion the voices of men are hushed. Christ does not speak to man; He is speaking from the depths of His Soul to His Father. Mary and John cannot speak; grief has sealed their lips. The soldiers who are forced to stay on guard are ill dis-

posed to break the dead silence; their fear has made them speechless.

What has come over the scene? How can we account for this sudden and terrible change? A few moments ago the walls of the city echoed to the shouts of nearly a million madmen; now all is silent, except for the occasional screams of frightened birds of prey that flit across the sky and dash wildly they know not whither, and the lowing of terrified cattle in the neighboring fields that hasten in mad disorder in search of cover. What is it that has happened? The change from echoing shouts to sepulchral silence must have some proportionate cause.

It has a proportionate cause. Far away from Golgotha, far away from the Holy City, even in distant Athens, there were some Grecian philosophers assembled. They knew nothing of the Deicidal crime that was in progress, they knew nothing of Jesus of Nazareth, nothing of His doctrine, nothing of His most remarkable career; but they knew something about the laws of Nature, and when they observed what was taking place, they were struck dumb by the unusualness of it all. One of them, it is reported, arose before the assembly and exclaimed: "Either the God of nature suffers or the world is in the throes of dissolution!"

Darkness had overshadowed the earth! "It was the sixth hour," says St. Luke, "and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." It was in striking fulfillment of the prophetic utterance: "Behold darkness shall cover the earth and a mist the people." Once during our Lord's life-time He ascended to Mount Thabor and, while engaged in prayer, His garments shone like snow and His face became like the sun. His majesty changed the darkness of night into the splendor of noonday. Now in His anguish He changes the brilliancy of noonday into the gloom and silence of night.

No wonder the scoffers dispersed, no wonder they rushed back to the city, and sought their homes. The mangled Body of Jesus Christ on the Cross was incapable of arousing fear in their hearts, but seen against a black noonday sky it became terrible! The consequent gloom became unbearable and it generated an interior gloom that forced them to feel the utter helplessness and insignificance of man.

There is a darkness that is natural, the darkness of night. It does not beget fear, because it is sent by the goodness of God as a time of rest to the weary world. It is during the darkness of night, when men are at rest, that the beasts of the wilderness become active. During

the silent hours of the night, the prince of darkness prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. During the night, his slaves, those who do evil and hate the light, the human beasts, go about their deeds of darkness. They have converted night into day!

There is an intellectual darkness, the darkness of ignorance of the things of God. It is sometimes unavoidable, but it is often voluntary. Blind lead the blind and both fall into the yawning abyss. Man is blind by reason of the fall. He needs guidance. He needs supernatural guidance. He loses himself when he struggles on through life alone. That is why Christ has left on earth His Church to guide us on the right way in matters of faith and morals.

We always need our Lord, but in darkness we need Him in a special manner. This is true of the natural darkness of night. It is true of the darkness of intellect. It is true of the darkness that will fall upon us in the "last evening" of life. It will be very still then about the house. Our friends will move to and fro on tiptoe, and whisper to one another in a sad, soft tone. Our eyes will grow dim and objects will appear in strange, unusual shapes. Those that stand near will seem far off. Our breathing will become shorter and quicker and at in-

tervals it will stop and then begin again. Our eyes will roll and our brows will be wet with perspiration. The end will be near. It will be the evening of life. Then we shall need our Savior, because nothing else, nobody else, can comfort us. If He does not come in to abide with us, it will be unutterably dark on that last evening and unutterably sad, too. We shall need Him to light us through the valley of shadows. Our prayer should be: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." Then His coming will bring light and joy. Then the last evening of life will be calm and peaceful, it will be a going home, it will be a sleep from which we shall waken in the presence of the Savior Who loves us now and will love us then, as He loved us when He was on the Cross. It was His love for us that caused the exterior darkness which we have seen and the interior darkness which we are now to study.

Christ is in His agony. He wishes to experience everything that is to come within the experience of man, so that He may leave us an example to follow. The darkness without is but a suggestion of the darkness that has settled on His human soul. Some have suggested that the exterior darkness is best explained by saying that nature mourned for nature's God.

This was indeed the meaning attached to it by the Grecian philosopher, Dionysius, when before his assembled comrades he declared that either the God of nature was suffering or that nature herself was in the throes of dissolution. Nor is there any reason to suppose that such a phenomenon would not be in keeping with the economy of God. When the Pharisees objected to our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and to the shouts of welcome with which He was greeted by the enthusiastic populace, He told them that the very stones would cry out, were the people to hold their tongues. Now, with the circumstances changed, when the people refuse to be moved to pity at the sight of the God-man hanging on a Cross, it is quite possible that God permitted even inanimate nature to grieve for the death of His Eternal Son. There is darkness over all the earth, the sun refuses to shine upon the work of blood, the very rocks, more tender than passion-gripped hearts, are torn asunder and the earth seems ready to open and swallow up the blasphemous Deicides.

During the terrible silence, and this awe-inspiring darkness, the Savior speaks again. He speaks briefly, but terribly. "Eloi! Eloi! Lamma Sabacthani!"—My God, my God, why hast

Thou forsaken Me?—How painfully in keeping with the lowering darkness is that piteous cry!

Forsaken! Most of us know the meaning of the word. Sometimes devoted mothers are forsaken by the children whom they nourished and for whom they toiled and sacrificed themselves. They are compelled to struggle hard and long to keep body and soul together, even while, in some instances, their ungrateful sons and daughters live in luxury and ease. "Mother, you have been very good to me!" said a young man as he stood at the death bed of her who raised him, gave him an education, and, by personal sacrifice which shortened her life, sent him well-equipped into the world. "Mother, you have been very good to me." The dying woman looked at him with tears in her eyes and spoke her last words on earth: "John," she said, "this is the first time you ever said so!" She had been forsaken by her son.

On the other hand, children are sometimes forsaken by their parents. I refer not alone to those who in tender infancy are left on the doorstep of a stranger; I refer, and with emphasis, to those who later on in life abandon their children to the blind guidance of the blind, to the Godless education of the world where they are

taught many things that either directly or indirectly blow out the light within their souls.

Forsaken! You may have been forsaken by those you love. The young man trifles with the affections of a girl and leaves her in a world of gloom. You assist a friend to rise to power or to wealth and when the coveted boon is possessed he forgets your efforts and your friendship and you feel what a volume is contained in that one word, forsaken.

It is a fearful thing to be forsaken by man, but to be forsaken by God! it is beyond expression terrible. Greater than the company of demons, greater than the very torments with which sin is punished, greater than eternity itself, to be forsaken by God, to hear those awful words, "Depart from Me," is the very thing that makes hell what it is; just as, on the other hand, the friendship and love of God make Heaven a place of indescribable happiness.

Now listen to what the dying Savior says: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? My people whom I loved and for whom I toiled, have forsaken Me and have nailed Me to this Cross; the priests, who inspired the multitude with cries of bitter hatred, have forsaken Me; even My beloved disciples have fled from

Me, but, O My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

What can He mean? Is it not He of Whom it was written: "Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the Gentiles for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession?" At His birth the Angels sang and made the hills of Bethlehem vocal with their songs of triumph. At His entrance into public life a voice was heard from Heaven saying: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Can it be that God is displeased now? Listen, from His own lips there comes the cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

What can it mean? There are many explanations given by the Holy Fathers of the Church. "I know not," writes one, "if any mortal man can understand how much mystery lies hidden beneath these words of expostulation." "Beware," says St. Bernard, as if objecting to the word 'expostulation,' "of thinking that our Lord Jesus has been betrayed into impatience, for all the while that He was enduring the extreme bitterness of the Cross, nothing but sweetness issued from His Heart." And St. Leo warns us not to interpret the words "as if the omnipotence of God had withdrawn from Him, for the nature of God and the nature of man are so

united that never can torments separate, nor death divide. The word is not a murmur, but a heavenly lesson."

We must not then interpret the words as if our Lord were really forsaken by His Father, except that being willing to drink, to the last dregs, the chalice which was prepared for Him and having taken the place of the sinner, He experiences momentarily the last awful result of sin, abandonment by God, as far as the Eternal Son of God could experience such abandonment.

More in keeping with the prayerfulness which our Lord ever manifested is the suggestion of those who remind us that the 21st Psalm begins with those words—"My God, my God, look upon Me! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" They assume that Christ was occupied, during the hours of silent darkness, in the prayerful recital of the Psalms, of those particularly which referred to His death. When He came to the 21st which details the horrors of the crucifixion, He began its recital in a loud voice, as if to call our attention to the vividness with which David described the Passion. Amongst other sentiments the Psalmist speaking in the Person of Christ Crucified expresses himself thus:

"I am a worm and no man, the reproach of

men and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn; they have spoken with their lips and wagged their heads, saying, He hoped in the Lord, let Him save Him, seeing He delighted in Him. * * * Many dogs have encompassed me; the council of the malignant hath besieged Me. They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones.* * * They have parted My garments amongst them and upon My vesture they cast lots."

How remarkable is the description of David and how natural it is for Him Whom David impersonated to recall these prophetic words and the prayers for mercy that are contained in the Psalm, at the moment when they are being so literally and so terribly fulfilled!

There is still another explanation of the cry of our Lord. It is St. Cyprian's. Our Lord, the saint tells us, is thinking of us, praying for us, appealing to us. "Why, O Father, hast Thou forsaken Me? Why hast Thou permitted this cruel agony? Is it not for the salvation of the world? Is it not because Thou hast so loved the world as to deliver Me, Thine only begotten Son, for its redemption?" Yes, let us ask the question, in this spirit. Gazing upon the face of Christ let us ask: "Why is He for-

saken?" St. Paul tells us and he tells us in words that strike us individually: "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me!" That is the answer, He is forsaken momentarily so that I may not be forsaken forever!

I THIRST

The end is drawing near, the great tragedy is almost over. The soldiers who had caught only the first syllables of the last cry of the Sufferer were seized with the false impression that He had called upon Elias and with great excitement and terror they say one to another: "Let us see if Elias will come to help Him." Involuntarily, they were acknowledging a half-belief in His Divinity which they took infinite pains to smother. The unnatural eclipse was well capable of inspiring this new dread. Their half-belief was born of a full consciousness of guilt. They look up at the Victim on the Cross, their eyes meet His and He speaks to them appealingly: I thirst!

This is the first expression of physical pain wrung from the Savior in the whole Sacred Passion. Hitherto He thought only of us; He prayed for mercy, He granted pardon to the penitent, He appointed Mary the Mother of the human race, He expressed, with terrifying vividness, the abandonment consequent on sin; but now He complains of thirst. He has, seemingly, directed His thoughts to Himself and to His sufferings.

I thirst! What a strange word coming from the lips of Jesus Christ! We know with what abundant reason He thirsts; He had lost so much blood in the Garden, during the scourging and on the Cross, and loss of blood causes such thirst that sometimes a poor sufferer forgets all other pain and cries for something to drink. No sufferer ever thirsted as Christ thirsts; but still it is strange when we recall the words which He uttered on other occasions, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" and "the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up unto life everlasting." It is strange, because Crucified though He be, He is still God and as God He spoke through the Prophet Jeremias: "Be astonished O ye Heavens, and ye gates thereof, be desolate. For My people have done two evil things. They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and have digged for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." He gave others to drink, He is the fountain of living waters, why is He Himself tortured by thirst? Such a question readily suggests itself to us. It springs not from blasphemous scepticism of the Jews, but from a desire to understand in what sense and why the Savior feels the additional torment of thirst.

When we understand the nature of His thirst and the excess of love that prompted the apparent appeal for something to moisten His parched lips, the words lose all their strangeness and what, at first sight, seems a complaint becomes an heroic act of love. "Afterwards, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the *Scripture might be fulfilled*, said: I thirst." The Royal Psalmist had said: "They gave Me gall for My food and in My thirst they gave Me for drink, vinegar." Christ then did not plead for a cooling potion, it was not a cry for water; it was the expression of a desire to drink the bitter chalice of His Passion to the last drop. As soon as the soldiers heard His cry they fixed a sponge on the point of a spear and filling it with vinegar and hyssop, they put it to His mouth. This is what our Lord wanted; more suffering and more bitterness! It was in later years this thirst of our Lord for suffering that made His fervent followers, like St. Francis Xavier, sigh for ever increasing suffering. "Yet more, O Lord, yet more!" the great Apostle of the Indies cried when, in an agony of pain and sorrow, he recalled how the Savior suffered for the souls of men. The same heroic desire to become Christ-like prompted St. Teresa to long for one of two

things; either "to suffer or to die." To suffer in order to be like Christ, or, to die, in order to be with Christ!

Exalted sanctity may be required to pray for more suffering; but ordinary Christianity ought to suffice for patience and resignation to the Divine will. "Pray not," said a truly Christian sufferer to one who had promised prayers for a speedy cure, "pray not that I be relieved of pain, but pray that God will give me grace to bear with continual patience and resignation the pain He is pleased to send."

"I thirst," said Christ before they gave Him vinegar and gall. "I thirst the more," He may well say now that His parched lips are drenched in bitterness. But great as was this torment, there was another thirst, of which the bystanders knew nothing. It was more keenly felt and more deeply fixed in the Savior's trembling breast.—"*I thirst for souls!*"

It is not impossible that at this very moment, the Savior looked down upon a scene that to His loving Heart was the cause of more bitter pangs than those of bodily thirst. He saw a man rushing madly through the streets of Jerusalem towards the temple where the High Priests had assembled. Frightened by the midday darkness and blinded by the still more terrible dark-

ness of despair that encompassed his soul, Judas, the traitor, Judas who had forfeited the Apostolic dignity, sought the men to whom he had sold his Master. Holding in deadly grasp the bag of money, that yesterday seemed so tempting and that was such a heavy burden to-day, trembling in every portion of his being, and yet with the firmness of despair and recklessness, he entered into the presence of the Priests. "Murderers!" he cried, "Murderers and deceivers! You have caused me to barter away an Apostle's glory and the inheritance of life eternal! And for what? For this! for this wretched gain, wages of guilt, blood-money! I shall have none of it. Take it back, and with it take the curse of an apostate!"

The priests were willing to promote their interests by murder, by bribery, by lies, but now, hypocrites that they are, they have a scruple. They will not compromise the purity of the sacred treasury by taking back the sordid coin, they will on no account defile their hands by touching the blood-stained money. They saw very clearly and unmistakably the blood upon the pieces of silver; they did not see, nor care to see, the blood upon their souls!

"What is it to us?" they ask, "it is your own

affair. See you to it!" And they bid the traitor go.

But Judas does not go. He can at least rid himself of the sordid gain. "Take back your money!" he exclaims and flinging it upon the pavement of the temple, he departs leaving the priests overwhelmed with anxiety and scruples.

If Judas only turned to the Cross, if he but prayed for mercy. He was sorry, but it was the deadly sorrow of despair. He grieved, but he grieved as one who had no hope. He would not look upon the Cross. He would not say: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He would not seek for Mary to tell her of his crime and so he added guilt to guilt, for despair is an insult directed against the goodness of God. He plunged from low to lower depth until at last he secured a halter and hanged himself.

We know not what miracle God's grace may have wrought in his wretched soul, even when he hung between heaven and earth, we even feel inclined to confound the sorrow of despair with the tears of the penitent, but this is an awful mistake; despair is not contrition, it is a terrible act of rebellion, an insult against the goodness of God. When man sins he abuses God's justice, when he despairs he abuses His

infinite goodness. To despair is to say that God is not good and merciful, and Judas despaired.

Christ saw it all. He saw beyond that scene far down the avenue of centuries, even to the end of time, and thought of those who like Judas would refuse to turn to Him and ask for pardon. He thought of the poor sinners for whom He shed His blood in vain, and in excess of love, He cries: I thirst, I thirst for souls!

I thirst! Ah if we were there! If, with the knowledge we now have of His infinite love for us and for the souls of men, should we not rush to give Him to drink? Should we not claim the privilege of offering a glass of water to quench His dying thirst? We should act thus in the case of the greatest criminal on earth! And yet, we were there, everyone of us was there, but not, alas, to comfort the dying Savior, we were there as sinners to increase His thirst. But now we can relieve Him, now we have power to diminish His thirst for souls, we can offer Him our own souls, we can dedicate ourselves to His service and labor in bringing others to a knowledge and an appreciation of His love.

Yes and we can diminish His physical thirst. Does He not tell us that, on the last day, He

will address us and say: "I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink?" and does He not add, by way of explanation, that "whatsoever you do to the least of My brethern you do it unto Me?" Yes, we can give Him to drink. He is in the person of the poor and of the handicapped in life's battle. The poor reach out their hands, but He receives the gift.

How terribly destructive of the spirit of Christian love is the teaching of those who, denying the Divinity of Christ, deny also the validity of this promise of Christ? The scoffing atheist in the poem tells the devoted Sister who is caring for the sick-poor that Christianity has had its day and the answer of the Sister is so full of eloquence that it brands the scoffing of infidelity as a crime against humanity.

Has! Has it come? It has only dawned, it will
come by and by,
O how could I serve in the wards, if the Hope of
the world were a lie?
How could I bear with the sights and the loath-
some smells of disease,
But that He said: You do it to Me when you do
it to these?

I thirst. This is an epitome of the strange thing which we call life. Man has a manifold thirst. He thirsts for knowledge, he thirsts for pleasure, he thirsts for all the things which we call good or beautiful, his soul thirsts and all

his senses thirst, in one word, he thirsts for happiness. It is a thirst that increases with the years, and the more man tries to satisfy it, the keener it becomes. "He that drinks of these waters, shall thirst again," said Christ to the Samaritan woman, and we may say the same of those who drink of the springs of knowledge or of pleasure.

The great scientist, Newton, when advanced in age called some of his friends to his side and said: "I know not what the verdict of posterity will be in my regard, I know not how they will look upon what are sometimes called intellectual triumphs, but to myself I seem to have been in the position of a little child playing on the sea shore with the great ocean of truth all undiscovered beside me." He drank deep of the springs of human knowledge, few have ever drunk deeper, but the result in his case, as in the case of others, was and ever will be this: He that drinks of these waters, will thirst again.

The great German poet, Goethe, had a long and prosperous life. He basked in the sunshine of success, he moved along the rose-strewn path accompanied by the music of friendly applause; and yet, when at the end of the path he looked back and summarized the history of his brilliant

career, he said something like this: Men have envied me, they have regarded me as a fortunate and a happy individual, but to myself I seem to have been "like a poisoned rat" running hither and thither, tasting of this and of that in a vain endeavor to quell the ceaseless gnawing within. A vain endeavor. He had drunk of the cup of pleasure, but in his case too, as in the case of all others, the experience of mankind has ever been: He that drinks of these waters shall thirst again.

Nay even in the sacred matter of faith, when the light of God illumines the intellect and the goodness of God strengthens the will, so that man feels impelled towards truth and goodness, there is still a thirst. "We see now darkly and in a mirror," we shall not possess the fullness of truth until we are privileged to gaze face to face upon God Who is eternal truth. We feel too the ecstasy of goodness from time to time; all our yesterdays become as "the tide-washed untrodden sands," and all our to-morrows loom refulgent with golden promises; but even then we know that we are but catching broken rays of the happiness which God has prepared for those who serve Him. Even in the midst of spiritual exultation, the saints looked heavenward and exclaimed: "How despicable earth

seems when I look up to Heaven!" How despicable indeed are earth's joys when compared to the "torrents of delight" and to the unspeakable treasures of eternity!

Man's life on earth is a thirst, a ceaseless longing for the fountains of living waters. Look again to the Cross, look and listen. "I thirst," says Christ. He said the same words to the Samaritan woman, and he added: "If thou didst but know the gift of God and Who He is that sayeth to thee, 'Give Me to drink,' thou, perhaps, wouldst have asked Him and He would have given thee living waters." May we not, without departing from the spirit of our study, hear those same words from the lips of Jesus Crucified? If we did but know Who it is that says, "I thirst," we should cast ourselves in adoration on the ground, or, with Magdalene, throw our arms about the Cross and exclaim from the depths of our souls: "O Fountain of Living Waters, O Christ, Eternal Son of God, Thou Who didst say: 'If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink,' give us always of this water that springeth up unto life eternal. Let it flow in vivifying cataracts over our thirsting souls, let it purify our sin-stained souls, so that we may not thirst again forever!"

IT IS FINISHED

Jesus, therefore, when He had tasted the vinegar said: It is finished! Just what an appearance the scene presented at this time, is uncertain. Some one has suggested that "the midday night is beginning to lift," that the black pall is torn by the winds and the silver lining on the sable clouds, as they roll away, tell us that the sun is still shining. It is a suggestion that seems to be more descriptive of what takes place in the soul of him who meditates on the Passion than of what actually took place on Golgotha. From the sixth to the ninth hour darkness overshadowed the earth, and at the ninth hour, far from decreasing, the gloom and the consequent fear increased. We must, therefore, still view the Cross shrouded in darkness and the figure of our Lord unhallowed by any light from heaven.

If nature gives no comfort, the Savior does. He utters what seems to be and what, in reality, is, as far at least as we are concerned, a sigh of relief: It is finished. Thank God, we very naturally add, that it is finished. Our dear Lord will suffer no more, the end has come or is about to come and all His pain and sorrow will

be things of the past. It is finished, the Passion has ended.

No, that is not what our Blessed Lord means, because, as a matter of fact, it is not finished. He is still in pain, He is still hanging on the Cross, still athirst, still forsaken! And what is more, the agony of death, the separation of soul from body is yet to be! What then is finished, O dear Lord?

At the Last Supper table, on the preceding night, Christ addressed Himself to His Heavenly Father and said: "Father I have glorified Thee on earth. I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." "If," it has been asked, "our Savior already finished the work which God had given Him to do, why does He repeat the same words upon the Cross? If, on the other hand, it is only now that the work is finished, why did He claim that it was finished when He sat down to His Last Supper?"

Our Divine Lord had two works to accomplish, to teach the world and to redeem the world. He was, in other words, to be our Master and our Redeemer. "*Dominus ac Redemptor Noster!*" During the three years of His public ministry He taught us the way to Heaven. According to some interpreters, it is to the work of Teacher that He refers at the Last Supper,

and on the Cross to the work of Redemption. But it is not possible to separate these two phases of Christ's career; during His Passion He taught more eloquently than ever and He suffered from the moment of His incarnation. Still we may with propriety regard His public life as made up of two distinct parts, the ministry of the word and the ministry of suffering. The former, in a sense, is finished on Thursday night. The other is finished now.

It is finished. Coming so close upon the fulfillment of the prophecy that in His thirst they would give Him vinegar to drink, the words suggest, at once, that the prophecies are all accomplished, not only those that were spoken in the Old Law, with so much vividness and unmistakable directness, but those also which He had Himself spoken. "Behold, we go to Jerusalem," He had said ten days ago, "when all things shall be accomplished which were written concerning the Son of Man. He shall be betrayed to the Chief Priests and Scribes. They shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified." All that had been written, all that He had said is now accomplished. It is finished.

O dear Lord, what more couldst Thou have done, than what Thou hast done? He has over-



looked nothing. Not a jot or tittle of the prophecies has been neglected.

It is finished. The work of Redemption is complete, God's justice is satisfied and the gates of Heaven, closed by sin, are thrown open to all mankind. Now more appropriately than ever can we exclaim with Simeon, as we look upon the Cross: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples." The aged Prophet who was privileged to take the Child in his arms saw but the beginning of our salvation. We who have looked with love upon the Cross, behold its accomplishment. The work of salvation is finished!

No man who is capable of serious thought can question the reality of the "fall." The records of human depravity, the religions founded on lust and pride and every kind of wickedness, the human sacrifices, the unspeakable horrors of the amphitheater, the prevalence of infanticide, the degradation of woman, the defilement of marriage, purity despised, poverty and sickness made criminal, meekness unknown,—all the public and social and domestic institutions made channels of blackest crime, proclaim, more eloquently than words can express,

how before Christ the race was in a fallen condition, how man had become a slave of Satan and reveled in the inglorious occupation of feeding the swine-passions.

They who, at present, deny the need of redemption, they who speak against vicarious atonement, are but furnishing additional proof of the fall of man. It is pride that prompts them, for pride alone can explain temerity. They disregard the teachings of the Old Testament: "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." They spurn the explicit assertions of our Divine Savior: "This is My blood which shall be shed for the remission of sins." They reject the belief of the centuries so clearly expressed by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews when he tells them that "Christ by His blood obtained eternal redemption," and so eloquently asserted by the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XV, who but recently informed the world that his policy is "to labor for the accomplishment of that for which Christ shed His blood, the eternal salvation of all men."

It is finished. Hell is conquered, sin is destroyed, Satan is bound in adamant chains, man is free. If it is finished, how is it that Satan still reigns and man is still a slave of sin? Christ's part is finished, man's part re-

mains. For Him it is finished; for us it is not finished. We must avail ourselves of the privileges won for us by the Savior. Satan cannot harm us unless we voluntarily place ourselves in his service. Sin has no power over us unless we freely run into its deadly arms. Death itself has no terrors because, if we serve God, and the service is made easy by the graces won for us by Christ, death is but a going home, death is but a meeting between the soul and the soul's best Friend and the meeting is but the beginning of eternal happiness.

It is finished. The foundation of the Christian religion is complete, the inauguration of the New Law is sealed, the temple of truth has reached completion and is topped by the Cross! What a sublime religion! What a marvelous law! What an enduring temple! All men know that the aspirations of the race are centered around the Cross. It is the keystone of the mighty arch which we call history. With His pierced hands Christ "lifted empires off their hinges and turned the tide of centuries and still rules the world." He curbed the passions that made wolves of men more wolf-like than the wolves, He raised degraded woman and placed her on a throne, a queen; He ennobled labor, changing it from the vulgar distinction of slaves

into a dignity and a duty, He elevated poverty from a curse into the first beatitude, He cast a halo around purity, He made of marriage a Sacrament or a channel of grace, He sanctified obedience and sealed it with His life's blood. No class of men, no condition of life, no circumstances were overlooked by Him. The orphan was henceforth to be sheltered, the sick to be nursed, the captive to be liberated, the slave set free, the innocence of childhood guarded and the aged cared for by ministering human angels.

It is finished. Is there anything else that He has done? Yes, the Savior of the world finished the program of peace among nations. On Golgotha, He erected a temple of peace, solid as the granite foundations of the earth and lasting as the pillars of heaven. A temple of peace! Yes, it is finished, from foundation stone to cross-crowned pinnacle! His part is finished. The nations' part remains! If the nations have failed to do their small part, no one can say without blasphemy, that the work of Christ was not complete. The nations have impiously built another temple and tried other ways, but ringing down the ages and echoing through the now blood-stained world, there comes the cry of the Savior: "I am the way, and there is no other way."

It is finished. Close upon the words and forming what has been regarded as their continuation and completion there comes the last expression of the dying Savior. "Father," He cries aloud, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and then bowing His head, He dies! During life, He taught us how to live; in the dread moment of death, He teaches an equally important lesson, how to die. Eternity depends upon our death and, in the ordinary disposition of Providence, apart from the special intervention of Divine Grace, our death depends upon our life. As we live so we shall die.

Grant, O Lord Jesus, by Thy Sacred Passion and death, by the sorrows of Mary, Thy Mother, and by Thy infinite love for us that we may so live, that when the last summons comes, when we are forced to say, "it is finished," we may add with strong faith, and firm hope, and child-like love, "Father into Thy hands, I commend my spirit!"

EPILOGUE

You may, if devotion urges, fix your gaze upon the lifeless, mangled Body that hangs on the Cross, you may linger for awhile with the bereaved Mother and the desolate John, on the now silenced Golgotha. There are many lessons to learn. Beautiful among the sons of men though Christ was, He is now but a leper and as one struck by God. He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins! Look then upon the dead Christ and you behold the terrible picture of sin, "framed upon the Cross!" Ordinarily, you cannot see sin, because it affects an invisible soul, but Christ in His Passion has made sin visible. The mangled body, torn with scourges, pierced with nails and drenched in blood, is an outward expression of the heinousness of sin.

Look again upon the dead Christ and you will find the last eloquent appeal made by God to the human race. He appealed through the prophets of the Old Law, He appealed with greater force through the teachings of His Son, He appeals with an eloquence that cannot be equaled through His Crucified Son! "God so loved the

world as to give His only begotten Son for its salvation."

Look upon the Cross and you will learn, as you can learn nowhere else, what the world thinks of Jesus Christ. "Away with Him!", they cried, "Crucify Him!" The cry was echoed through all the ages, it is heard even in our own day. The servants of Christ are treated just as their Master was treated, the same charges are urged against them, "they are enemies of Caesar" and "they disturb the peace," and the same punishment is meted out to them. The blinded minions of the world, the High Priests of "Natural Religion," the present-day imitators of the hypocritical Pharisees, have raged and are raging against God and against His Church. They are appealing to the multitude through the sordid press, they are prompting the cry: Away with Him and with His Church! In this country, thanks be to God, they have had little success, the American people is, for the most part, too fair minded to join the senseless rabble, but,—it is useless to deceive ourselves,—we sometimes applaud the senseless rabble of other countries and thus give our moral support. Would to God that it could be said that we never give and never have given material support!

It is a sad thing to think that in the twentieth

century, notwithstanding the lessons of the past, men still sit in council against the Savior of the world and boast of driving Him and His followers into exile; but though sad, it is not without its comfort. By this very fact, we can recognize the servants of Jesus Christ. "If you were of the world," He has told us, "the world would know its own; but because you are not of the world, because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." And in the Sermon on the Mount, He has said: "Blessed are ye when they revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My Name's sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven."

Such is the comfort; the servants can look for no better treatment at the hands of the world, than was received by their Master. The lesson is that we must flee from the spirit of the world, avoid its maxims and its principles and live always and only for God and build our hopes in Heaven.

Amid these and similar thoughts which are in part consoling and sad in part, there comes one which borders on despair. Jesus of Nazareth is dead! He is conquered! His friends secure permission from Pilate to give a decent burial

to His Body, they seal the tomb and retire to their homes to mourn over His loss. His enemies exult; the city has been rid of the Disturber! No more will the people shout their hosannas and proclaim the Upstart King. Their remembrance of what He said about the "third day" causes a fear to linger in their hearts, and, though they regard it as one of the many hallucinations to which Christ was subject, still, to make assurance doubly sure, they set a guard of armed men to watch His sepulchre.

Now He is vanquished utterly and the human heart is chilled by the thought. If we look back through the years and through the centuries, we find that there never has been a real conqueror. Summon up in imagination the mighty generals who led their soldiers through pools of blood to victory, the brilliant lawmakers who built kingdoms and empires and founded republics, the scientists who counted the stars in the heavens, or analyzed the minerals of the earth and who boasted from time to time of having conquered the laws of nature. Where are they now? You know where they are. They have been conquered, every single one of them, by Death. "Conquerors conquered" is the epitome of human greatness.

What a sweeping conquest on the part of

Death, and, O God, what an absolute failure on man's part. Look back and you see a collection of sepulchres and monuments with the terrible inscription on them all, "Here they lie!" and the big black banner of Death floating over the tombs of the vanquished race of men. Look around you, and you will observe how day by day and hour by hour the universal conqueror is reaping the never failing harvest. Look ahead and you find nothing but the certain prospect of your own defeat.

Alas! for poor human nature! Slaves in the caravan of Death we are marching steadily forward to defeat, marching onward even now to the frontiers of the Kingdom of Death whence no man returns. It is all very well to exclaim with the boastful pride of the poet:

"Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once."

It is all very well to put fear aside but we cannot put aside the fact that death is certain and that it is most terrible.

"O Death, all eloquent, you only prove
What dust we dote on when 'tis man we love."

We should like to find in the records of history a conqueror of Death—and Jesus of Nazareth, Whom we have seen crucified, seemed for a time to satisfy this desire of human nature.

He stood one day at the tomb of Lazarus and with a mighty voice exclaimed, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came forth. He met at Naim a funeral procession and, on inquiry, learned that the only son of a widow was being borne to the grave. He took the dead boy by the hand and said, "Young man, arise," and the young man arose. Similarly He summoned back from the clutches of Death the daughter of Jairus. Such was indeed the import of these wonderful accomplishments that it has been truly written:

The worm within each rose's heart was curled
Until His mystic might at Naim hurled
Death's menace back upon itself and stilled
The immemorial wailing of the world.

Christ seemed to supply the only solace in the thought of death, but now behold, He is Himself dead and buried and an armed guard is set about His sepulchre! With Him is buried the hope of the world, the immemorial wail returns, and man must admit an universal defeat.

Ah no! it is not over yet. The story of Christ's love is not fully written. It was Sunday morning, a glorious spring morning in Palestine. The fields were carpeted in green and interspersed with white lilies, which waved before the gentle morning breezes so that the land-

scape resembled a stretch of ocean's palpitating breast. The winged songsters rose to greet the rising sun that had already sent forth his herald rays to paint the East with crimson and gold. They entuned their sweetest spring-songs and their music mingling with the fragrance that arose, incense-like, from the meadows floated sweetly towards the throne of God.

It was, you may say, a beautiful morning, except for one thing. Down in the dark ravine there was a tomb, and what is more it was His tomb! O Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, O men and women of every race, of every creed, of every age, there is, it is true, a tomb, but it is empty! The stone has been rolled back, the soldiers have been dispersed and Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified is not to be sought amongst the dead! Visit that tomb and read His epitaph. What do you find: "Here lies Jesus of Nazareth?" No! "Here lies the sinless Son of Mary?" No! "Here lies the Lamb of God Who was unjustly slain?" No! a thousand times No! His epitaph is dropped from the lips of angels: "He is risen, He is not here, behold the place where they laid Him!"

Now you have a Conqueror, Who has not been conquered by Death, now you have One Who conquered the universal enemy, and Who

from His empty tomb could exclaim: O Death, where is thy victory? It is this conquest, more than anything else that has won for Him the admiration of all the world and the adoring faith of Christians. Once during His earthly life He entered in triumph into Jerusalem. He has come down the centuries in triumph. The burst of enthusiasm—"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"—that re-echoed through the Holy City, has been caught up in all ages, has found expression in all climes and has stirred the human heart to its profoundest depths. If there be any now—and unfortunately there are some—to whom as to the Pharisees of old, the joy of the believer is as gall and wormwood, and who in their jealousy and pride would have the people hold their peace, they may be answered as their prototypes, the Pharisees, were answered: "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out."

Indeed the stones have cried out, if we may use this term to describe the hearts of the infidel, the scoffer and the unbeliever. Too much importance is not to be given to the testimony of the irreligious for the simple reason that irreligion is the deepest dye of insincerity to which the human mind or heart is subject; it is in-

sincerity with God and with oneself and from those who are insincere with their God and themselves, it is not reasonable to expect sincerity in their dealings with us. Still it will do no harm to listen to what the very stones have to say of Jesus Christ.

"I esteem the Gospels," writes Goethe, "to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendor of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so divine a kind as only the Divine could ever have manifested on earth."

"How petty," adds Rousseau, "are the books of philosophers with all their pomp, compared with the Gospels! Can it be that writings at once so sublime and so simple are the work of man? Can He, whose life they tell, be Himself no more than a mere man? . . . What sweetness, what purity in His ways, what touching grace in His teachings, what loftiness in His maxims, what profound wisdom in His words! . . . Yes, if the death of Socrates be that of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God!"

"The morality of Jesus Christ," says Strauss, "is the foundation of human civilization." And his assertion is amplified by Renan: "The moral teaching of Jesus Christ is the most beautiful

doctrine that mankind ever received. . . . Each one of us owes to Him what is best in himself. . . . The Sermon on the Mount will never be surpassed."

Jean Paul Richter corroborates the foregoing with a tribute to the power of our Savior: "The life of Christ concerns Him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted, with His pierced hand, empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel and still governs the ages."

To these testimonies of infidels we may add that of one who, though not an infidel, was during the greater part of his life a great bad man. Napoleon "strode the world, in his day, like a Colossus." However devoid he was of morality no one will deny that his intellect was gigantic and that, in the seclusion of exile, his heart gradually settled down to a calm equilibrium. "I think," he said one day at St. Helena, "I understand somewhat of human nature and I tell you all the heroes of antiquity were men, and I am a man; but not one is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires; but upon what did the creations of genius depend? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded His

empire on love, and to this day millions would die for Him." On another occasion he exclaimed more briefly: "I know men, and I tell you, Jesus Christ is not a man!"

Other instances of how the very stones cried out might be added without end, but it is always more refreshing to listen to the voice of the children of God. More refreshing and more instructive because when the saints speak they express something more than the emptiness of admiration, they speak of hope and of salvation. When Peter and John were apprehended, and asked to explain in whose name they had cured the lame man, Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them:

"Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear: If we this day are examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole, be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, Whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth before you whole. . . . Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."

All very well, you may say, Christ conquered

Death and the world proclaims Him King and Master, but we, poor weak mortals, are still doomed to suffer and die. Look again at the empty tomb, look upon the risen Christ and listen, with love and with hope, to the words He speaks to you and to all the world:

“I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live and every one that liveth and believeth in me shall not taste death forever!” He conquered and He conquered for us!

GOD BLESS YOU.

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